

FORBIDDEN APARTMENTS.

A TALE.

—♦♦♦—
LANE, MINERVA-PRESS, LEADENHALL-STREET.

ST. JAMES'S CATHEDRAL

FORBIDDEN
APARTMENTS.

A TALE.

IN TWO VOLUMES.

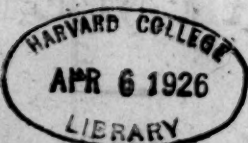
BY
WILLIAM LINLEY.

"Things just so strange, that though they never *did*,
yet they *might* happen."

SHERIDAN'S CRITIC.

VOL. II.

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THE

Forbidden Apartments.

CHAP. I.

THE Baronet, for some moments, stood without thought or motion; but recollection soon returned, with an aggravation of terror and despair that almost deprived him of his senses. The window was open, and there wanted no other circumstance to convince him of the fatal advantage that had been taken of it.

VOL. II.

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He

He rang the bell with frantic violence ; he threw himself upon the ground with every symptom of distraction ; again he started up, and rang the bell. Selgrave entered the room.

“ Villain ! ” exclaimed Sir George, grasping him by the arm, “ what !—where is she ? You have seen her ; you have hid her from me ! She cannot be dead ! God of Heaven ! dead ! ”

“ How idle is this mad behaviour,” replied Selgrave, disengaging himself ; then seeing the window open, he turned pale, and rushed towards it with the candle in his hand.

The storm had gone by, and a beautiful moonlight evening had succeeded it. He placed the candle on the table, and
fearfully

fearfully examined the ground beneath; but no Rosara was to be seen.

The Baronet had thrown himself upon the bed, torn by contending passions. Terror, love, grief, and disappointment by turns assailed him; and deep groans expressed the anguish of his mind. The rest of the party had now entered the room, and by degrees brought him to himself. Various were the conjectures that followed an explanation of circumstances, not one of which could give our hero a moment's consolation. That she must have thrown herself from the window, no person attempted to dispute; but at such a height from the ground, would she not have dashed herself to pieces, or at least have fractured her

tender limbs? And from whence was the timely help to come?

Mrs. Morrison was now summoned; but Sir George had met her on the stairs at the moment the fatal determination must have been carried into execution; nor could it have been possible for her, feeble as she was, and in the condition the Baronet had seen her, to have afforded her any assistance, or even to have secreted her from his view. The confidential servants had never quitted their posts; or if they had, how could they have interfered? Where could they have conveyed her, and by whose instigation?

The most diligent search was however made, both within and without the house;
every

every inch of ground was examined; every hole and corner, but in vain. The neighbours were called from their habitations at a late hour; no traces of Rosara were to be found

Worn out at length with fruitless enquiries, Sir George and Selgrave returned to Bexfield; where they had left their two friends on guard, and conjecture was renewed. Sir George listened to the consolatory advice of his companions, in a state of sullen despair, occasionally interrupted by paroxysms of rage and invective. He could not bear to think Rosara had destroyed herself; yet it was evident she had made her escape from the window. Some person must have had a ladder in readiness then. But who could this person be? And how was it

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possible for him to effect his retreat so securely, and in so short a time?

After a long and mortifying debate on the subject, Selgrave's opinion was deemed the most probable.

“As to supernatural interference,” said he, “the idea is farcical. The only means by which Miss Courtland could have escaped (for of her death I have no apprehension), must have been projected by Lovel.”—Sir George started.—“Ignorant as this fellow pretended to be of our scheme, he knew of it well. How he has been able to thwart it, I own I can form no conception; but that he has done it, and successfully too, I have no longer a doubt. He is the only man, the present company excepted, and the
servants

servants below, who could even have formed a suspicion of it, either of its nature, or of the time when it was to be carried into execution."

This was a forcible truth; yet Sir George recollected many circumstances that seemed to acquit his servant. He had also received a letter that very day, which mentioned Lovel's arrival at Tunbridge, so that he could not have been at Bexfield in person; and what means had he to influence other people to so hazardous an undertaking? Selgrave, too, was much astonished at this account, but he thought it most prudent to adhere to his original opinion; as, at all events, it would bring about the poor fellow's dismissal from his master's service—a circumstance

of no trifling importance to this gentleman's views.

Our hero arose on the following morning from a bed of thorns. Repose had been banished from his pillow. The pangs of solicitude and remorse had been tearing his heart, and were now depicted on his haggard countenance. A train of dreadful fancies had succeeded one another in his mind, and filled him with despair! He called to recollection the awful warnings of his lost friend For-dyce.—“The calamity that attends upon vice is punishment enough,” he would often say.—The Baronet had been vicious—he was now punished. To lose Rosara, and in such a manner—conscious of having made a good man miserable—of having blasted his honour, his happiness,

ness, every thing that was dear to him; uncertain as to his future fortunes; his principles shaken; his understanding debased, and his constitution wasted by habitual dissipation; these were reflections he could not bear to indulge, and he had begun to form some very desperate resolutions, when Selgrave entered the room.

Whatever opinion this gentleman had formed in his own mind, as to the fate of Miss Courtland, he was, upon the whole, glad that the adventure had terminated as it had done. Her ruin might have been attended with very disastrous, if not fatal, consequences to the whole party; and though she might have been brought to forget the injury, and even to forgive the perpetrator, he knew it must have

been the work of considerable time. As the matter had ended, notwithstanding the manner, he saw no harm that could possibly result to himself; and the fittest opportunity now offered of again pressing his own subject upon the Baronet's attention, especially as he would want every assistance from love and friendship, to reconcile his mind to the loss he had sustained. With this *laudable* design he approached him; spite of the indifference Selgrave at all times felt towards objects of wretchedness, the present appearance of the Baronet rather shocked him. His whole person was discomposed, his hair hung in a dishevelled state; his looks were pale and haggard, his eyes wild and fiery. He started from the gloomy reverie in which his despair had plunged him,

and fiercely regarding the intruder, bade him begone.

“ To leave you thus, would ill become your friend and adviser,” replied Selgrave; “ my wish is to impart consolation to you, and to propose——”

“ Your propositions, Sir,” answered Sir George, “ as well as your advice, I can now dispense with. The *consolation* I have hitherto experienced from them, has only soothed me into a more miserable state of wretchedness; and I should have but an ill opinion of your judgment, if you could not perceive I have now no further occasion for your services.”

This was uttered in such a tone of resolute indignation, that Selgrave knew

not what to reply. He paused for a few moments, and then proceeded—

“ I have, Sir George, on more occasions than one, submitted to the caprice of your temper, and to the sudden gusts of your passion. What motive could induce me to do this, but that which, when it lays hold of the heart, rules it at discretion—I mean friendship?—Think you I would have engaged in the present affair with a man to whose pleasures and interest I was indifferent? Where would have been the temptation? How could I have been benefited by its success? You say, and rather unjustly, that my advice has hitherto only served to plunge you into a more miserable state of wretchedness;—you will recollect I more than once advised you not to pursue the present design

design upon Miss Courtland. I represented, in strong colours, the disadvantages you would labour under, the difficulties you would have to encounter, and the probable failure of the whole undertaking: but when I saw you were determined to go on, you must be sensible that my zeal was never behind hand. You must admit, that in the whole process of the scheme, I have been assiduously anxious for its completion, although much against my inclination; for I foresaw more danger must have accrued from its success, than we have now the least reason to apprehend. Miss Courtland has been rescued by some friends, who, apprized of our intentions perhaps, and our determination to oppose every interruption, found it necessary to use stratagem instead of violence, and they
have

have succeeded. By this time they have restored her to her father, and all will be hushed up. What then remains for you to do? Why, to banish from your thoughts a foolish girl, in whose heart you never, as it appears from her whole conduct, held the slightest sway; and whom having enjoyed, you would have turned from with disgust. What! shall it be said that Sir George Meriton, born to attract the general circle of rank and beauty, who has been accustomed to contend with wit in its greatest perfection, with elegance and refinement in all their delicious varieties; to whose judgment and taste society has long been indebted for the wreaths of fashion—that such a man has yielded up his happiness at the shrine of ideal love, and that he has determined to dress himself in cypress and yew for the

the

the love of a fair, cruel maid—a country Parson's daughter?—For shame, my friend! Why, we shall have the story cried about the streets, and sold by some ballad-singer for a halfpenny! Come, come, you cannot justify your ungenerous suspicions, and even accusations of me; but I can at all times make allowances for the stings of disappointment.”

Every part of this speech was calculated to make an impression upon the Baronet's mind. Selgrave certainly had endeavoured to dissuade him from prosecuting the design against Rosara; and Sir George could not deny the justness of his retort. The ridicule which he had judiciously interspersed with his arguments, had also its full weight; and although far from wholly subduing the tumultuous passions that

that were warring in his bosom, yet brought him more to himself, and opened a small aperture in his mind for the return of reason. He sat for some minutes silent; at length he arose from his seat, and went to the window.

“ I perceive,” resumed Selgrave, more off his guard than he had ever been, “ we must separate ! I can pass over the flights of passion, but not the insulting silence of contempt.”

Sir George resumed his seat.—“ Why,” replied he, “ am I to be thus teased ? And how comes it that you are so dexterous in finding out meanings for every action and expression I use ? I may have been hasty in some words ; but you drew them upon yourself by your unseasonable interruption.”

Selgrave

Selgrave was satisfied. He saw he had touched the right chord, but that it was necessary the vibration of it should continue longer upon his friend's mind, ere other strings were meddled with; he therefore withdrew, and Sir George proceeded to dress himself—a ceremony which Selgrave had the full credit of causing.

CHAP.



CHAP. II.

AFTER another more general, but as fruitless enquiry, concerning Rosara, Sir George returned with his party to London. Lovel was immediately summoned to answer the accusations that were brought against him. The faithful domestic hesitated a little upon his being first questioned, and was instantly dismissed from the Baronet's service. His Sussex commission had been faithfully executed; nor would Sir George, on any other occasion,

occasion, have made so hasty and so rash a decision; but, blinded by his passions, distracted by his disappointments, and rendered suspicious from the variety of mysterious vexations he had undergone, he had no longer a judgment to correct his determinations; all within was tumult and confusion—a heart ashamed to own, yet inly gnawed by its own reproaches.

The report of Rosara's flight from the Vicarage had never reached St. James's Square; nor had any enquiry been made concerning it, directly or indirectly. This determined Sir George to revisit Hertfordshire, and to learn in what manner Mr. Courtland had borne his loss, and whether his daughter had been restored to him: how she had been rescued, and by whom? At another time
such

such a journey, and upon such an occasion, would have called the blush of shame into his cheeks; but he felt now wholly indifferent to any thing that might happen to him, and set out on the following morning with a gloomy determination to satisfy his curiosity, even at the peril of his life.

On his arrival at the inn, which had been the scene of former plotting and contrivances, his fears and apprehensions began to revive. The idea of Rosara's death, of her injured father struggling under the oppression of the most poignant sorrow, of the agitation that must betray him from the consciousness of knowing himself to be the author of the good man's afflictions—these considerations so completely overpowered him, that he sunk
into

into a chair, unable to make the most distant enquiry. Whilst he was absorbed in the most painful rumination, a servant passed him, whom he remembered to have seen at the Vicarage. He turned pale, and his knees trembled as he approached the door to catch the sound of his voice.

“ So, Mr. Thomas,” exclaimed a person at the bar, “ what brings you here so soon again ?”

“ Why, my master must have a chaise to-morrow morning early,” replied Thomas; “ our Susan has just given him a letter, which I suppose is upon business, and which should have been presented yesterday; but she had mislaid it, as she does every thing else I think that one wants.”

A long

A long conversation succeeded; but nothing transpired from which Sir George could collect any intelligence concerning Rosara.

Mr. Courtland, he was now convinced, remained at the Vicarage; and he concluded that the chaise which had been ordered, was to convey him to his lost daughter. The letter which had been mentioned, he doubted not came from the person or persons who had so wonderfully rescued her, and who were unwilling to trust her again in any hands but her father's.

This idea agitated him beyond expression; he felt his love, so far from being subdued, returning with increased violence. The surrounding objects brought
back

back to his remembrance the hours of happiness he had spent with Rosara when she had beheld him with the eyes of tenderness and esteem; when, unsuspecting of the depravity of his heart, she would have confided in his honour and protection, where opportunity was most inviting. He had abused this confidence; he had been guilty of the greatest ingratitude towards her excellent father; he had perhaps destroyed his everlasting peace of mind! What was he now to do? Was he to give her up for ever? There remained but one alternative; it was to repair instantly to the Vicarage, confess his guilt, and sue for forgiveness, to demand Rosara for his wife, to abandon Selgrave, and to return to virtue!

Will

Will it be believed that our hero issued from the inn with this resolution? He did; and with a heart lighter and more tranquil than when he considered his most vicious desires as on the eve of uninterrupted gratification. But he had not yet been sufficiently punished for the sins he had committed; Fate had destined him for still severer trials, and he was yet to be convinced that there does exist a Providence, who will not let the guilty man escape!

On his arrival at the Vicarage, his heart sunk within him; he had scarce power to open the outward door. A strange servant met him, of whom he asked if Mr. Courtland was at home, and if he could speak to him."

"Certainly,

“Certainly, Sir,” replied the man;
“please to walk into the parlour, and I
will acquaint my master.”

With faltering steps the Baronet followed his guide, who introduced him into the very parlour where he had originally been brought on his pretended fall from his horse, and in which he had held his last conversation with Mr. Courtland. There was no alteration in the room. He sunk into a chair, and waited the approach of his friend in trembling suspense. The door presently opened, and Mr. Courtland entered—not the mild, venerable father, but the youthful brother of his injured mistress. He had a letter in his hand, which he had been perusing; and his countenance exhibited strong marks of distrust and impatience.

“ I am told, Sir,” said he to the astonished Baronet, “ that you wish to speak with me ; what are your commands ? ”

“ I beg your pardon, Sir,” replied Sir George, “ I wish to speak with Mr. Courtland.”

“ My name is Courtland, Sir ; but perhaps your business is with my father.”

“ It is, Sir,” replied the Baronet, who now recollected the circumstance of the good Clergyman’s having a son. “ I came to explain some matters of importance to him, which I hope may end in contributing to his satisfaction. When can I expect the pleasure of seeing him ? ”

“ Sir,” rejoined young Courtland, with a look of the most eager impatience, “ if your business be of consequence, I shall probably meet him to-morrow, and
will

will impart it; at present I believe he would not wish to be intruded upon."

Sir George was rather nettled at the impetuosity of this reply; but his anxiety to hear of Rosara prevented him from retaliating so sharply as he otherwise would have done.

"My business, Mr. Courtland," answered he, "is not of an intrusive nature, but it is such as I wish to negotiate myself. I hope your father and sister are well."

The mention of his sister threw the young gentleman off his guard.

"Sir," exclaimed he, in a transport of indignation, "I have *no* sister! She has
c 2 abandoned

abandoned herself to the worst of villains! and is the worst—damnation!” Then recollecting himself, he paced the room in the most frantic disorder.

The Baronet’s passions took fire; reason and consideration fell from their slender seat, and he only recollected he had been branded by the name of villain, without taking into the scale that he had deserved the appellation.

“You are not aware, Sir,” retorted he, “that you may be accusing an amiable sister wrongfully, and that you have applied a term the most opprobrious to a man, whose conduct and intentions you are unacquainted with.”

“And pray, Sir,” resumed Courtland, rising from his seat, “may I presume to demand

demand the name of so violent an advocate in the cause of seduction?"

"My name," replied our hero, no longer able to subdue his indignation, "is Meriton—Sir George Meriton! You probably have heard of such a man, Sir?"

Courtland reeled into his chair! His countenance changed from the glow of passion to a deadly paleness, and he sat for a few minutes incapable of utterance. Sir George observed his consternation, and continued.

"Mr. Courtland, I do not pretend to justify my conduct towards your sister, and I came hither with a design to make every reparation in my power. Blinded by your rage, you have insulted me with a name which the consciousness of my

good intentions tells me I do not deserve ; and till you have retracted the expression, you cannot expect I will enter into further explanation with you."

"What your intentions now may be, Sir," replied Courtland, recovering, "I have not the slightest wish to know ; what your conduct *has* been, proves you to be a villain, and a seducer !"

"Well, Sir," retorted the Baronet, "where and when do you propose we should meet to decide this difference?"

"To-morrow morning at six o'clock," replied Courtland, "in the field opposite the Vicarage."

"I shall be there punctual to the minute," rejoined Sir George ; and immediately taking his hat, he quitted the room.



CHAP. III.

OUR hero's apprehensions were now renewed; the event of the duel, should Fate decide it in his favour, left him without a hope of future reconciliation with Rosara. Would she not fly with horror from the man who had shed her brother's blood? On the other hand, to be cut off by an untimely death from the enjoyments of the *only* world he had been taught to look up to—this prospect was equally dreadful. He wrote, however, to

c 4

Selgrave,

Selgrave, who instantly attended the summons, and arrived at the inn just as Sir George had finished some letters, and was preparing to go to bed. After some general conversation, during which the subject of the duel was amply discussed, the Baronet put a packet into his friend's hands. — "That packet," said he, "if I fall, you will open; and as I have ever considered you as my friend, I doubt not but you will faithfully discharge the trust I have committed to your care. You will find, perhaps, a little difficulty in contending with some of my creditors; but I think I have opened an accommodation which will satisfy them. Here is another letter you will deliver to my steward; it principally relates to the Abbey, and the forbidden apartments."

Our

Our hero now sunk into a reverie, which his present critical situation might well excuse. Selgrave did not attempt to interrupt him; his mind, perhaps, was little less agitated. He foresaw, with some degree of inquietude, that the present encounter would prove fatal to one party; and in either case, that some danger might attach to himself. To dissipate these reflections, and prudently considering that there was now no remedy, he proposed a bottle of wine; and the Baronet, who had no inclination to sleep, made no objection. In this employment they passed the night, till it was too late to go to bed; they then sallied forth, and walked till it was time to attend the fatal appointment. Young Courtland and his friend were already upon the ground. As the seconds were

well acquainted with the nature of this quarrel, they did not attempt to make it an amicable adjustment. The ground being accordingly taken, it fell to the lot of Mr. Courtland to fire first. He did so, and missed. Sir George hesitated a little, and then fired his pistol in the air.

“This will not satisfy me!” exclaimed Courtland. “I beg, Sir, you will return my fire.”

“I am at liberty to act as I think proper on that head,” replied the Baronet; “as you are not satisfied, you may fire again.”

“And by Heaven I will!” exclaimed the other, in an exasperated accent. He did so, and the Baronet fell.

Selgrave

Selgrave instantly made the signal for the surgeon, who had been previously appointed to attend.

“ I fear,” said Sir George, “ I am mortally hurt ; advise Mr. Courtland to make his escape !”

“ His friend has already hurried him away,” replied Selgrave.

The surgeon, having examined the wound, applied a temporary dressing, and the Baronet was conveyed back to the inn. The ball was with difficulty extracted ; but so much pain had attended the operation, that a fever ensued, and it was found necessary to convey him to town. For four days the life of our hero was in imminent danger ; and not till the fifth did the physicians perceive that

his disorder had taken a favourable turn; but although the fever was at length subdued, his wound was slow in healing, and confined him to his room six weeks. In this interval every exertion was made by Selgrave to reconcile him to the irreparable loss of Rosara. He used every argument to convince him that she must have been rescued by the contrivances either of Lovel or Mrs. Morrison; and that again to renew his attacks, even could her retreat be discovered, would be as dangerous as fruitless.

The Baronet, whom disappointments and sufferings had rendered almost desperate, gave himself up at last to the remonstrances of his adviser. He was once more to enter the world—once more

to

to engage in its dissipations.—But how changed! That countenance, once so open and commanding, was now overshadowed by the gloom of suspicion and reserve. His complexion was grown pallid, and his form faded. Guilt and sorrow had fallen upon him; nor had he one virtuous friend to soften the pangs of reflection, or bid him look forward to brighter prospects. The same rash and inconsiderate disposition that had led him originally into the trammels of his seducer, prevented now the interposition of repentant thoughts; and to plunge into deeper scenes of vice, appeared to him the only refuge from misery. Abandoned to these ideas, Selgrave no longer found a difficulty in effecting his former purpose; and Miss Inglefield was publicly acknowledged and received into the politer circles

circles of prostitution, as the kept mistress of Sir George Meriton.



CHAP. IV.

MR. COURTLAND, the younger, had, in the midst of a gay and dissipated set of young men, been greatly shaken in his principles. Naturally violent, it had been the strenuous endeavour of his venerable father to correct and qualify his disposition. The mild doctrine of Christianity, which teaches forgiveness of injuries, and patience under the sharpest indignities, was, however, too hard a lesson

lesson to learn ; nor could young Courtland, any more than the rest of the world, submit to follow the example of his Saviour, because his *honour* forbade him. In London he became daily more indifferent about a scrupulous behaviour, and began to think morality a bugbear. When religion ceases to be regarded, and the performance of a sacred duty is deemed unnecessary, the mind is soon taught to admit that the indulgence of all natural desires is innocent ; and that “to be true and just in our dealings,” is the sum total of real virtue.—Thus, while young Courtland was all good-nature, philanthropy, justice, and generosity, he was likewise idle, extravagant, licentious, quarrelsome, and proud. The intelligence of his sister’s flight with Sir George Meriton had been reported to

him previously to his receiving any account from his father, and in colours rather aggravating. Inflamed with rage, he immediately set off for the Vicarage; but was thunderstruck on finding only one servant in the house, and every thing in confusion. The servant could give no other account of this change in the family, but that his master had set off the day before in a postchaise, and had left a letter for him. The letter was short and mysterious; it ran as follows:—

“ Dear Son,

*“ I am at this instant so pressed for time, and so hurried in my spirits, that I can say but little. Beware of giving way to the violence of your passions, and all
will,*

will, I hope, end well. I shall be back to-morrow or the next day; till then I beg you to be patient; and, above all things, avoid being biassed by false reports;—your sister is *innocent*!”

Such a letter, and at such a time, made him suspect even his father of insincerity. What business could have hurried him away from his own home at a period so distressing? Was he not gone in search of his deluded child? And if she had been really innocent, would he not have been more explicit?

Sir George's visit had been made the very day of young Courtland's arrival, and not an hour after he had received the
above.

above. The scene that followed need not be repeated: the son was unmindful of his father's advice, and Heaven had prepared a punishment for his disobedience. Concluding that the Baronet had been mortally wounded, from the hasty opinion of the surgeon who attended, young Courtland returned to his friend's house in all the agonies of remorse and despair. He reflected too late that he had, in defiance of his father's recent advice, and contrary to the principles of justice, obeyed the impulses of his fury without weighing the magnitude of the aggressor's fault, or receiving his explanation: on the other hand, that a temperate, but resolute behaviour might have settled every difficulty, and that an honourable atonement might have been productive of happiness to all parties. But what

now

now might be the consequences of his ungoverned rage? Frantic, and overpowered by his sensations, he wildly left his asylum, determining to evade the hand of justice by a disguise, however degrading. An opportunity soon offered. He had taken the road to Hatfield, and was met by a recruiting party; he instantly enlisted as a soldier, and received the bounty.

The scourge of Heaven was still upon him; for when recollection returned, and the tide of passion had spent itself, he began to doubt the absolute certainty of Sir George's death, and conceived, if he had been only wounded, all might yet end well. Enquiry would have succeeded this consideration, but a newspaper fell in his way, which recounted the duel,
and

and confirmed his worst apprehensions. Resolving, therefore, to continue in his disgrace, he was soon after ordered, with his regiment, to the West Indies.

Miss Inglefield had made her own terms with the Baronet, whose pursuits had unfitted him even for that society he had once considered the most ruinous. For-dyce had left him buried in the vortex of dissipation, but not depravity. Wisdom and temperance had deserted him then, but Reason had not entirely quitted her seat; a sense of rectitude remained, and generosity and good-nature directed every action.—Now, sad reverse! unable as he had made himself to keep up a connection in the refined circles of fashion, he was become the companion of gamesters and prostitutes; men of desperate fortunes,

Fortunes, and the worst principles, were the associates of the elegant Sir George Meriton, and he was glad to bury himself in the wretched obscurity of vice, that he might not experience the torment of seeing others happier than himself. To prevent the obtrusion of his dreadful reflections, his life became a round of libertine indulgences : from the arms of his mistress he fled to the bottle, and from the bottle to the gaming-table.

Miss Inglefield had now resided with him six months, during which period her extravagance had made large encroachments upon his purse. Naturally of a good temper, she soon found the art of creeping into the Baronet's affections. Lively and communicative, she became indeed almost necessary to his existence ;
for

for in those hours, when, spite of himself, the reproaches of his conscience would be heard, she had always a flow of spirits to repel their attacks.

The visits of Selgrave were become less frequent. Miss Inglefield's monthly supply of money had been regularly divided between them; but she had contracted debts elsewhere, and prospects of difficulty began to rise.

The house in St. James's Square had experienced great alterations since the departure of Fordyce. All the pictures had been sold; and as the apartments had long ceased to be the rendezvous of fashion, a council was held between these two friends, at which it was determined that the Baronet should sell also the house,
and

and the rest of the furniture without loss of time.

Sir George, grown indifferent as to his future fate, and careless of the opinion of the world, abandoned to a life of idleness, and devoted to his infamous advisers, was soon prevailed upon to favour their designs. The supply of ready money the sale of this elegant mansion would afford him, was a temptation not to be resisted; but little did he suspect that every thousand he now acquired, was but feeding the flame of ruin, and supporting the devastation of vice.

In a month after this resolution had been formed, eight thousand pounds was paid down for the noble edifice of Sir George Meriton in St. James's Square;
and

and the Baronet himself, accompanied by Miss Inglefield, took possession of a small house in Gerrard Street.

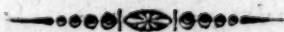
These movements were, however, attended with difficulties that not even Selgrave had been able to foresee; the numerous creditors were roused to a sense of danger, and extremities were resorted to, to enforce payment of debts long due, and which the Baronet had completely overlooked. Another impending blow seemed to threaten almost immediate destruction: this was the seizure of Bexfield for the accumulated interest upon the mortgage, which had never once been paid. The same account informed him of the ruinous condition of the Abbey; and that the estate was, in consequence, almost deserted by the farmers.

farmers; that strange reports had been fabricated in the neighbourhood concerning the Baronet, who had never been among them since his father's death; and that the village gossips had so effectually spread the contagion of superstition there, that poor old Morrison was left entirely to himself.

To obviate the first of these difficulties, his friendly steward advised him to come to an immediate accommodation with the mortgagee, which he said he knew might be effected by selling the estate to him out and out; and in which arrangement the interest now due would be reckoned in the additional payment he would receive.

The Baronet was a little surprised at this proposal. There was indeed something so extraordinary in it, that he hesitated whether he should accede to it, or not. He knew that the claimant had a right to seize upon the estate: what motive then could induce him to wave this plea, and accommodate him in a manner so noble and disinterested? There was, however, no alternative. The steward received full powers to settle the difference; the old deeds were soon after destroyed; another pecuniary supply assisted to ward off the blow of the law, and an interval of temporary tranquillity succeeded.

CHAP.



CHAP. V.

SIR GEORGE had now but one resource. The Devonshire estate would still, under proper management, have paid all his debts, and secured to him a handsome, though not a splendid establishment; but his mind was incapable of forming such an arrangement. Out of the produce of what he had lately sold, three thousand pounds only remained; and it was perhaps fortunate for him that he had been obliged to satisfy the demands

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of

of his creditors with the rest. This was the period at which he might have saved the wreck of his shattered fortune; but, as if he courted the misery that was pursuing him, he rushed more deeply into his former extravagances, and every hour became more dissolute.

It was at this period of our hero's life that Selgrave, prompted either by curiosity, or some sudden interested motive, determined to retract his former opinion regarding an examination of the forbidden apartments, and prevail upon the Baronet to take a journey into Devonshire, for the express purpose of exploring them. Accordingly, one day after dinner, at which he contrived that no one should be present but Miss Inglefield, he opened the subject.

“ Prithee,

“Prithee, Meriton,” said he, “do you never intend to visit your estate in Devonshire again? I should have no objection to pass a few days there with you and Lucy. Suppose we determine upon the trip; it will be changing the scene, and we shall return to London with fresh spirits and vigour.”

A groan was the only reply Sir George made. The mention of the Abbey raised in his bosom a thousand distracting sensations. He had never been near it since his father's death; and to return to it now, his mind so altered, his disposition so unsuited to the tranquil scene, to prepare the way for so many bitter recollections, notwithstanding the gloomy indifference that had lately taken posses-

sion of his soul, he could not avoid being moved by this proposal.

“Nay, Sir George,” continued Selgrave, “have done with these childish fits. Learn to laugh at the incidental distresses of life, as I do;—no man has felt them more than I have; no man has been more the dupe of Fortune: but when I found them affecting my spirits, I thought they were arrogating to themselves too much importance, and I shuffled them disdainfully off. This conduct enabled me to return the buffets I received; my mind became more vigorous by exertion, and the disappointments I daily suffered, served only to strengthen my resolution.”

“Why should I go to the Abbey?” replied the Baronet; “I want no change of scene: besides, it’s a cursed encumbrance

brance to me, and I was thinking of selling it."

"You seem to have forgotten," replied Selgrave, "that there is a *part* of it you do not yet know how to estimate!"

The Baronet started.

"There was a time, Sir George, when an examination into this mystery might not have been so strictly proper; but necessity, in my opinion, absolves you from any further restraint, as you cannot conscientiously dispose of the Abbey without being previously convinced you are neither injuring yourself nor the purchaser. Besides, the funds begin to fall. Here's poor Lucy has not had any pin-money, she says, this half-year!"

“How can you tell such a fib, Charles?” replied the fair; “upon my soul, my dear Meriton, I never made any such complaint; and if I were never to receive a supply, provided I have your love, I should rest amply satisfied.” Then throwing her arms round his neck, she embraced him with all the ardour she could assume.

The infatuated Baronet returned her caresses; and taking a Bank note of fifty pounds from his pocket-book, presented it to her.

“Charles is right though,” replied he; “but you should speak, Lucy, when I don’t pay you regularly; so give me another kiss!”

The

The subject of the visit to the Abbey was now resumed ; and after some painful struggles, Sir George consented to the journey.

Orders were immediately sent to old Morrison and his wife (who, since the sale of Bexfield, had gone to live with her husband) to prepare apartments for their reception. The servant, dispatched with these orders, was likewise desired to bring some account of the Abbey, and whether it was in a condition to receive visitors immediately.

After an absence of three days, the messenger returned. He said he had seen the old housekeeper and her husband, whom he found sitting by themselves in the servants' hall ; that they

expressed great surprise, but satisfaction, when they heard it was their master's intention to visit the old Abbey once more; and that no time or attention should be lost in rendering it comfortable for him and his guests; that in four days the apartments would be sufficiently aired for their reception.

This intelligence determined the Baronet, who before had betrayed some irresolution; and preparations for the journey were made accordingly.

The following night he dreamt of the Vicarage, and Rosara. — Her lovely image shot across his fancy in all the bloom of innocence and happiness. He thought he was walking with her in that flowery path where first he had forced from her the

the dearest secret of her heart. The venerable Courtland appeared before them; a smile of benevolence sat upon his features, and he had lifted up his hands to bless them.

Sir George at that instant awoke, and found himself encircled in the arms of Miss Inglefield. He started from her with disgust: the delightful vision of virtuous love was still present to his imagination; and Rosara, the lost, beguiled Rosara, once more took possession of his thoughts.

Selgrave attended at breakfast for the purpose of arranging their party.

“ Meriton,” said he, “ we shall be dull at the Abbey by ourselves; what say

D 6

you

you to inviting a friend or two to join us? I met Melbank and Darnley just now; they have no objection to accompany us; and we can have some coursing with Jack's greyhounds, which he has promised to bring down."

"Oh! let them come by all means," replied the Baronet; "the more the merrier."

A distorted laugh accompanied this speech, and wretchedness was never more strongly depicted on his countenance.

"Why, what's the matter now?" demanded Selgrave; "no new misfortunes I hope?"

"No," replied Sir George, with a convulsive sigh, "the old ones are quite enough."

“What, relapsing into the blue devils again?” rejoined the other; “for shame! for shame!”

“Harkee, Charles,” resumed the Baronet, “I mean to ride out this morning. Will you accompany me?”

“Certainly,” replied Selgrave, “anywhere but into the Serpentine River.”

“I have not been in Hertfordshire since my meeting with young Courtland; and I have a strong desire to know whether the old Vicar still resides where he did, and what is become of his son.”

Selgrave saw so firm a resolution to go in Sir George's countenance, that he did not attempt to dissuade him, though he was at a loss to account for this sudden revival of the subject. Since his recovery from the duel, no mention had been made
of

of any one of the family ; and it appeared to have been the Baronet's wish that all remembrance of them might be obliterated from his mind. His dream, however, had recalled his keenest sense of recollection ; and every other consideration sunk beneath the impression.

Miss Inglefield had heard the horses ordered ; and as she had been always accustomed to accompany our hero in his diurnal excursions, was somewhat surprised to find he was setting out without her.

“ And why am I to be left out of your party, my dear George ? ” demanded she, with a soft, resentful air.

“ You ! ” replied the Baronet, disdainfully, and forgetting himself ; “ can I contemplate

contemplate the walks of innocence and *Rosara* with you?"

A look of astonishment was the only reply Miss Inglefield could make, and she directly rushed out of the room.

The Baronet paused : he recollected himself, and would have called her back, but the entrance of Selgrave prevented him.

"Come, Sir George," said he, "what are you about? The horses have been waiting this half hour!"

"I am ready," replied the Baronet; and they immediately mounted, and rode off.

The day turned out remarkably fine; but our hero found little enjoyment in surveying

surveying the surrounding country. Every object brought back to his remembrance those delights he had shared, and might still have partaken with Rosara and her father. It was now the beginning of October, and about that time of the year he had first planned her seduction. As they approached the village of Cheshunt, his emotions visibly increased.

“ Perhaps,” exclaimed he, and a gleam of hope played faintly upon his pallid countenance, “ perhaps they have not left the Vicarage ;—she may be still there, still *unmarried*, still living for the miserable Meriton !”

“ Heyday !” replied Selgrave, “ what rhapsody and nonsense is this ? Egad, ’tis well Lucy did’nt hear you !”

“ Damnation !”

“ Damnation !” retorted the Baronet, with a frantic gesture ; “ can you couple them together ?”

“ And so you really think,” replied Selgrave, with a malicious grin, “ you have as great a right to play with female hearts as ever ? But you must recollect, Sir George, that Lady Meriton would now be only Lady Meriton ; not to shine at Court, or in St. James’s Square—no ! not even in the cheerful vales of Bexfield ; but to do penance within the mouldering walls of the Abbey, without equipage, without connections, without society ; her chief employment the study of economy, to save the remnant of a broken fortune, and make, as the vulgar phrase is, “ both ends meet !”

Sir

Sir George was mute. Accustomed to the dissipations of the town, and confirmed in his vices by the profligate example of his associates, he had not the courage to quit them. The truth of Selgrave's remonstrance was but too evident; and to become at once the object of calumny and scorn, was what he had not yet learned to endure.

"No," replied he, after a pause of sullen despair, "the die is cast, and Fortune must take her course with me!"

They now entered the village, and alighted at the inn. Being shewn into a room, Sir George threw himself into a chair, and Selgrave called for some refreshments. The Baronet drank only a glass of wine, and then proposed that they
should

should immediately remount their horses, and proceed to the Vicarage.

“And to what end?” asked Selgrave.

“Should Mr. Courtland be there, or should his daughter be with him, on what pretence can we again intrude upon their privacy? Recollect, Sir George, if they could have forgiven the first offence, how will they be able to overlook the duel; the consequence of which you probably are unacquainted with?”

“What is the consequence?” demanded the Baronet, impatiently.

“The gentleman who accompanied young Courtland to the field, informed me that, in consequence of your supposed death, he had abruptly quitted his house, and had not since been heard of; ’tis certain,

certain, therefore, he has either left the kingdom, or put an end to himself!"

"Well," answered the Baronet, "on this business I certainly can justify myself."

"But who is to confirm the truth of your account? or do you imagine a man of old Courtland's principles would ever condescend to discriminate between right and wrong in a duel? Come, come, Meriton, this is an unpardonable weakness in you, to hanker thus after a baby-faced girl, who probably may not exist; or if she does, has by this time been taught to detest, as much as ever she loved you!"

Sir George made no reply, but darting out of the room, called loudly for his horse, mounted, and rode off, telling his servant to wait till he returned.

As

As he approached the once happy seat of innocence and love, every nerve became agitated. As the Vicarage appeared in view, his fancy pictured Rosara looking from her window, as she had been wont to do when she expected his arrival. Alas! how transient was his dream of delight! On examining the house, he found it closely shut up, the garden overgrown with weeds, and every familiar object bearing the marks of desertion. An old woman obeyed his repeated summons at the outward gate; who, when he enquired, in faltering accents, for Mr. Courtland, answered, that she did not know *any such person*!—"To whom, then," continued he, "does this house belong?"

"Lord help your Honour," replied the old woman, somewhat startled at his vehemence,

vehemence, "I am sure I can't tell his name; I only know I was placed here by farmer Glynn, to keep the house till the owner returns, which won't be, I believe, yet awhile."

"And where can I find this farmer Glynn?" demanded Sir George.

"Why he did live down in that there house, Sir," replied the old woman; "but he don't live there now: I think, but I don't know, as how he's gone to live somewhere near Hatfield."

"Fiends and furies!" exclaimed the Baronet; "but did he never tell you of a Mr. Courtland, a clergyman that resided here? Did you never hear his name mentioned?"

"Indeed, Sir," replied the poor woman, who now began to be seriously terrified,

terrified, "I be a stranger in these parts, and scarcely knows a soul in the parish."

Sir George paused a moment, made desperate almost by his disappointment. At length he recovered his speech. "May I see the house, good woman?" continued he in a milder tone.

"Yes, sure," replied the other, "if your Honour pleases."

Sir George now dismounted, and tying his horse to a tree, began his examination. The back parlour remained in the state he had left it when he parted from young Courtland; not a picture had been removed, or a piece of furniture misplaced. He then examined the other apartments; but not a room appeared to have been molested.

"This

“ This is very strange,” observed he to himself. “ And how long have you been left in charge here?”

“ Why, let me see, about three months, Sir,” replied the old woman.

The Baronet now returned to the inn, more disconsolate than ever. He was persuaded Mr. Courtland still possessed the Vicarage, but that he merely made it a temporary residence, in order to avoid as much as possible the reflections it revived.

Selgrave confirmed the truth of this opinion, by acquainting him of his having commenced a strict enquiry in the village concerning the old Vicar; and all he could learn was, that since the misfortunes that had befallen his family,
he

he had been but seldom among his old parishioners, and that his stay was always very short; that the Vicarage, however, still belonged to him."

"And what do they suppose their family misfortunes to be?" asked the Baronet, faintly.

"Why what signifies your knowing?" replied Selgrave. "Mr. Courtland's conduct, by all accounts, wears an air of mystery; he comes here occasionally, but always unattended; and no one can tell to what part of the kingdom he returns. Concerning his children he is silent; but it is the general opinion among his old friends, that he has *lost* both."

"I am satisfied," replied Sir George, after a minute's desperate struggle, in which he seemed to hesitate whether he

should continue to bear further the buffets of Fortune, or dash his head against the wall.—“And now, Charles, I'll return with you to London, from thence to the Abbey, or to the devil if you chuse it! So damn the world, and confusion to all philosophy!”

“With all my soul!” replied Selgrave; “that's the most sensible speech you have made to-day.”

At this moment the waiter announced dinner. Sir George ate little, but his libations to Bacchus were large and frequent. In the evening they returned to town, and went to the play; where the general bustle of the scene, added to the wine he had drank, prevented the Baronet from relapsing into the misery of reflection. Towards the conclusion
of

of the fourth act, he saw Miss Inglefield sitting in a side-box between two Officers, with whom she was conversing with all the familiarity of an old acquaintance. Selgrave had discovered her too; but for reasons, which the reader need not be informed of, he chose to be silent on the subject.

Sir George was in the worst humour in the world for receiving the first impression of jealousy:—not that it was a jealousy founded on the supposed loss of a tender and affectionate love, but one that arose from the consciousness of insulted pride. That Miss Inglefield, however indifferent she might be in reality to him, in regard to her person or conversation, should give a marked preference to another, and make him, perhaps, the instru-

ment for the better prosecution of her intrigues, was a circumstance he could not bear to doubt about. Her present appearance in a side-box with two strangers, looked very suspicious. She had never before visited the Theatre but with the Baronet himself. It was clear she had taken the present opportunity of his going out of town without her, to depart from that rule. Her companions were rakes of fashion, with whom Sir George had been formerly acquainted, and who were in habits of making regular nightly assignations.

At first he thought of shewing himself in the box ; but Selgrave remonstrated against this, at the same time observing that there was nothing in it ; that he was confident no injury to his *honour* was intended,

intended, and that he was sure Miss Inglefield would give a very satisfactory explanation when they met.

“ Who the devil doubts it ? ” exclaimed the Baronet ; “ but rot me, Mr. Selgrave, if I’ll be made a convenience of ; I pay the jade handsomely, and if she’s not content, let her march off ! ”

Miss Inglefield had had the use of her eyes as well as our hero, and managed her cards with infinite dexterity. After a hasty explanation of her difficulties to the two Noblemen, they presently took their leave ; not with the least freedom, but with all imaginable respect. Five minutes afterwards, casting her eyes, as if undesignedly, into the box where sat Sir

George and Selgrave, instead of betraying the least confusion, she smiled and nodded to them, as if entirely unconscious of having given, by her conduct, the slightest offence or alarm,

This change of affairs, so very different from what the Baronet had expected, greatly lulled his suspicions, though it did not altogether cancel them.

“ I told you,” remarked Selgrave, “ you had nothing to apprehend. Those Officers have joined another party, and you observe she does not appear the least confounded.”

“ She had no business to go to the play at all without me,” replied Sir George.

“ Come,

“Come, shall we join her?” answered Selgrave; “she is keeping the seats for us.”

“Not I,” returned the Baronet; “my head aches cursedly. Do you bring her home, Charles; I’ll go first, and see what’s for supper.”—So saying, he withdrew, and Selgrave soon after joined Miss Inglefield.

CHAP. VI.

OUR hero's female friend possessed, among other qualifications, a very scrupulous sense of justice ; nor could she, as most women do, draw the nice discrimination between the constancy of the sexes, or bring herself to admit that a man, whilst openly attentive to other women, has a right to expect an unalterable conduct in his wife or mistress. With these sentiments, so opposite to the general axiom, no wonder her resentment
was

was roused at the disgraceful comparison which Sir George had drawn in the morning between her and Rosara. It was the first time the name had ever been mentioned in her presence, and she wanted no farther confirmation of the Baronet's attachment to some other woman. The only circumstance that puzzled her was, that Selgrave should accompany him in what she concluded to be a visit to this lady; and that he should appear to encourage addresses which, as she concluded they were honourable, must prove ultimately prejudicial to both their interests. This enigma did not, however, deter her from meditating a scheme of revenge, in which she was to be assisted by Lord Benfield, a dissipated young Nobleman, who had long admired her.

To Selgrave she made no hesitation in declaring her purposes; nor could he get her to believe a syllable of Rosara's history, or that she was at this moment probably dead. Her opinion, like those of most other women, once being formed, the powers of reason could never shake.

"Well," said Selgrave, after a long conversation with her on the following morning, "if you must keep up a correspondence with his Lordship, I hope you'll not let me be a sufferer by it."

"Certainly not, Charley," answered the lady.

"And be careful," continued he; "for the Baronet's suspicions have not yet evaporated, and he has another good estate to be taken care of."

To this caution Miss Inglefield returned a contemptuous smile. The fact was, her indignation had so far got the better of her prudence, that she felt very little care about a discovery. She had saved money unknown to Selgrave, during her abode with Sir George, and began to part with a share of her allowance to the former gentleman with some reluctance. Added to this, she was not without hope that Lord Benfield would consent to receive her into his protection; in which case, she would have bade adieu to both without further ceremony.

Selgrave was not at all pleased with this new manner. His partner in iniquity began to assume airs of sudden independence; and her general behaviour was very different from that humility

which had attended his first introduction of her to Sir George.

The Baronet had made her a present of fifty pounds but a few days before, and Selgrave now demanded a moiety. After some hesitation, she peremptorily refused to give it. He was too much himself to quarrel with her on this account, and wisely put up with his disappointment, in the expectation that she would afterwards consider it as a debt of honour.

Sir George had taken no further notice of the playhouse adventure; but his suspicions of her constancy, instead of subsiding, became every day more evident.

At

At length the day arrived which had been fixed for the visit to the Abbey. The Baronet's carriage and two post-chaises formed the equipage. Selgrave, Melbank, and Darnley came together with their servants; and Miss Inglefield was the only person wanting to complete the party. On a summons being sent her, her servant returned with an answer that she had been taken suddenly ill the night before, and must beg to be excused commencing so long a journey; that if she found herself better, she would follow in a chaise the next day.

The Baronet's face was covered with scarlet.—“ ’Tis false!” exclaimed he; “ I know her complaint; she’ll not get better till I return; but tell her to be cautious

cautious what *physician* she employs. Darnley, have you brought your dogs?"

"Spring and Snap, at your service, Sir George," replied Darnley; "as pretty a brace of greyhounds as ever started a hare."

"Well, they may be accommodated in one of the post-chaises," continued the Baronet; "you and I, Jack, will go in my carriage, and Selgrave and Melbank, the two devils incarnate, may follow after."

Our hero was not conscious of the propriety of the expression. According to this arrangement the party set off, leaving Miss Inglefield to regulate Sir George's *domestic affairs* as she might think proper. It was late ere they arrived at Salisbury, where they made a halt; and

and the Baronet found himself, for the second time, in the room of an inn where he had been once charmed and edified by the interesting conversation of Mr. For-dyce, at a time when his heart was un-corrupted, when his understanding was vigorous, when his conscience was clear, and happy prospects strewed roses upon his pillow. What now was his condition? Uncertain of the consequences of his vicious habits—answerable as he had made himself to charges of the blackest ingratitude—perhaps murder! with a body wasted by intemperance, and a mind enervated by idle and loose society; torn by the frequent pangs of a still unextinguished love—of a love that might have snatched him from the brink of depravity, and preserved him for the enjoyment of real and substantial happiness!

ness! Was he unmoved in drawing this fatal comparison? No; he sunk into a chair; his senses forsook him; he called on Fordyce, on Rosara, on Heaven to rescue him from perdition!

Darnley stood aghast with astonishment; Selgrave and Melbank had witnessed paroxysms of the kind before, and were more collected: the waiters rushed in, and our hero was removed to his chamber. Here, with great difficulty, Selgrave reasoned him into composure, and he attended at supper as if nothing had happened. The room was a different one; and as no mention was made of his sudden fit, he by degrees relapsed into his usual manner, and joined in the general conversation.

The

The bottle passed with more than usual celerity, and the transient oblivion of every care succeeded. Nothing of any consequence happened till their arrival at the Abbey, which was late in the evening of the next day. As they approached the venerable edifice, which seemed to frown on its dissolute, misguided master, Sir George again felt all the stings of reflection; but Nature had exhausted herself, and a gloomy despondency was all that marked its struggles in his bosom. Many of the tenants that had continued faithful to him, stood ready to welcome his return, as they had before stood to lament his departure. Alas! his was not the countenance to receive joy or congratulation; and when he alighted from his chariot, his feelings almost overcame him.

“ You

“ You look very ill, my good master,” observed old Morrison, as he conducted him into the well-remembered breakfast parlour. “ Shall I get you any thing before supper? Bless me! what a change have a few years made in your appearance!”

“ Prithee, old man!” replied the Baronet, “ no gossiping, but make haste with some supper: my friends are tired and hungry.”

“ Aye, do, my old Philistine,” added Darnley. “ Damme, what a fine old fellow he is, Baronet; rot me but he looks as strong and as Gothic as thy old convent itself. Come, bear a hand, father Abraham, for your Devonshire air has made me as hungry as Lucifer!”

Morrison retired, and as he shut the door, again regarded his master's faded face,

face, while a tear fell upon his own. In half an hour a very neat supper, under the special direction of Mrs. Morrison, was served up. Sir George used every exertion to eat heartily, and rally his spirits, but in vain. He threw his plate from him, and preserved a gloomy silence.

“ Pshaw !” cried Melbank, who was yet ignorant of Selgrave’s motives for bringing the Baronet to the Abbey, “ what, in the devil’s name, did you come here for, Meriton ? unless indeed there is another fine girl in the case. She can’t so well give us the slip in one of these towers ; and an Abbey is the prettiest place in the world to *confess* her in.”

A heavy

A heavy groan issued from an adjoining apartment at the other end of the room. The company all started; and the Baronet, rising with great composure, walked to the door, and opened it. The moon which had risen, shone full into the chamber; but nothing was to be seen but the furniture, consisting of a few chairs, an old bookcase, and a picture of Queen Elizabeth, which hung over the fire-place. The door of this apartment was likewise open, and led to the great staircase of the Abbey. From the damp which suddenly struck upon our hero, he concluded that this part must have continued in the same state as when he left it last.

Sir George now returned to his friends, and rung the bell. Morrison appeared.

“ Pray,”

“ Pray,” demanded he, “ is any body ill in the Abbey ?”

“ Ill !” replied Morrison ; “ no, Sir, nobody that I know of.”

“ Who lives here besides you and your wife ?”

“ Not a soul, Sir ; and till she came, I was fain to live by myself ; for the people of these parts are so foolish and superstitious, that I could not get a single tenant to come and take a cup of ale with me sometimes.”

The deepest attention was now paid by all the company to Morrison’s account, and the Baronet proceeded with his interrogatories.

“ What, they are afraid of ghosts, hey ?”

“ I suppose

“ I suppose so, Sir; for my part, I have lived in your Honour’s family too long to be scared out of my wits by any such nonsense.”

“ Well, Morrison, it is a proof of your wisdom; but I don’t remember that any such terror prevailed during the life of my father.”

“ That’s the point, Sir; it is only since his death that these alarms have commenced. If you remember, Sir, after Sir Ashby had fitted up the western apartments, he locked the door with his own hand, and kept the key himself. When he died, some solemn injunctions were given, concerning them, to his dear friend, Mr. Fordyce, and I understood likewise to your Honour: but one circumstance I know was, that Mr. Fordyce took possession of the key, and it became generally reported

reported that those apartments were *bequeathed*, as it were, to him. Now, Sir, your long absence from the Abbey, to which it was supposed you would sometimes come, and the departure of Mr. Fordyce with you, who has been equally a stranger——”

“What,” interrupted Sir George, “has not Mr. Fordyce been here since our departure together?”

“Not once, Sir, as I am a sinner; for I have never left the Abbey. But as I was saying, since all these things took place, the persuasion has been general that the Abbey, and those apartments especially, are haunted. Some go so far as to say that they have seen lights, and strange shapes.”

“And have they never heard strange noises?” demanded Sir George.

“Very

“ Very likely, Sir,” replied Morrison, with a smile ; “ but I never heeded what they said on the subject.”

“ Well,” resumed the Baronet, “ I must now repeat my former question, are you sure there is no one ill in the Abbey? Any of the servants that came with us ?”

“ Indeed, Sir George, I am quite positive there is not one; for my wife has been entertaining them in the servants’ hall ever since your arrival; and, except to attend upon your Honours, I have never quitted them myself.”

“ Observe me well, Morrison,” continued Sir George, “ I will not be trifled with. These gentlemen, as well as myself, were alarmed just now by a groan issuing from yonder chamber. Concluding some person was lying sick in it, I
softly

softly opened the door for the purpose of making enquiry, and, if possible, of administering all due assistance. The patient, however, had made his escape, and with some celerity too, or I must have observed him."

"I am very much surprised at this account, Sir," replied Morrison; "all the ways but through this parlour, to that part of the Abbey, are shut up; nor have I opened them but twice since you left it."

"Do you mean to include the door leading to the great staircase?" asked the Baronet.

"Certainly, Sir," replied Morrison, amazed.

"Then that door I found wide open; and it still remains so."

Morrison soon satisfied himself of this truth, and then withdrew, saying he would make enquiry of his wife, who certainly must have been privy to this business.—“If she has concealed any person in the Abbey, Sir, it is without my knowledge: but I am most puzzled to know how she came by a key to open that door; for mine I have never let out of my possession.”

Surprise, little short of consternation, kept the company for a long time silent. It was broken at length by Darnley.

“Very pretty sport, faith!” exclaimed he, “to come very near two hundred miles to be humbugged by ghosts and groans!”

“If

“ If you do not relish the sport, Sir,” replied the Baronet, rather nettled, “ you are at liberty to depart whenever you please.”

“ Nay, Georgy, why so snappish ?” rejoined the other ; “ I was only in fun.”

The conversation was now resumed, and the bottle began to circulate, when Morrison returned. His countenance was as serene as before, but there was a little confusion in his manner. He begged to speak to the Baronet alone,

“ If what you have to say,” observed our hero, “ relates to the former subject, you may speak out. These gentlemen, I presume, are as little apprehensive of goblins as you are, Morrison.”

“ My sentiments, your Honour, remain as before,” replied Morrison; “ not that I entirely disbelieve in the possibility of a supernatural interference to prevent the commission of bad deeds.”

“ Well, to the point,” interrupted Sir George, the mystery of Rosara’s deliverance rushing at that moment upon his mind.

“ No, Sir,” continued Morrison, “ let the wicked tremble——”

“ No comments, I say again,” interrupted the Baronet; “ what account do you bring from your wife?”

“ She protests solemnly, that so far from having brought any body into the Abbey, she is unacquainted with the whole neighbourhood round about. You know I told your Honour we had no society; that as to the door being open,

open, she never was in that part of the Abbey in her life. Now, Sir, it is possible that when I visited it the last time, I might have forgotten to shut that door, and the noise you heard certainly proceeded from the wind; it could be nothing else. To-morrow, however, we will inspect those apartments if you please, Sir, and you will then be satisfied."

Morrison withdrew, and the company again were silent. That a groan, and one heavy in the extreme, had issued from that chamber, there was no disputing; it had affected the party at the same time; and all at the same time uttered an appropriate exclamation of surprise. With this conviction, even Selgrave retired to his apartment under some degree of awe!

Sir George's predominant sensation was grief; and Darnley and Melbank, from a motive which need not be declared, begged Mrs. Morrison to put them in a chamber by themselves. On entering his apartment, the Baronet started, and suddenly changed colour:—it was the chamber in which his father had died; on the very bed he was to repose, the good Sir Ashby had breathed his last!

“Why,” exclaimed he, turning suddenly round, and addressing Mrs. Morrison, who had herself conducted him to his room, “why am I to sleep here?” Then recollecting himself—“But it is no matter—good night!”

Mrs.

Mrs. Morrison immediately withdrew. Sir George had little inclination to sleep. In bed, the train of miserable reflections, that had been wont to disturb him, returned with additional force. The time, the place, the groan he had heard, all conspired to unbend his resolution. With these impressions upon his mind, it was a long time before he could compose himself to rest. At length the fatigue he had undergone, demanded from nature a respite, and he fell asleep. The same dream that had produced such an effect upon him, when he had started, disgusted, from the embraces of Miss Inglefield, again presented itself. The good Courtland was in the act of blessing him and his lovely bride, as before; but the Baronet did not, as before, awake. A clap of thunder seemed to forbid the banns! A

sudden whirlwind seemed to sweep them from the blooming garden of the Vicarage, and he fancied himself in the very room in which he was really sleeping. But Oh! what a scene presented itself to his distracted imagination! The room was hung with black; on the ground lay extended the breathless remains of Mr. Courtland and his children, clad in their shrouds, and ready for interment: and on one side, pointing to this dreadful ravage of death, stood the pale image of his father, and the menacing Fordyce! Fancy could add no greater horrors, and instantly forsook him. He awoke. The dreadful vision still lingered on his view, and he shrieked with agonizing terror!

Selgrave, who lay in the adjoining room, jumped from his bed. Fortunately
he

he had accustomed himself to sleep with a light burning in his room:—this was not yet extinguished. He immediately lit his candle, and rushed into Sir George's apartment. The Baronet was sitting up in his bed; cold drops of sweat were trickling from his temples, and his eyes were still fixed on the fearful phantoms of his imagination. The entrance of Selgrave dispersed the vapour.

“ Oh God! Oh misery!” exclaimed he, “ by Heaven and hell I will endure this no longer!”

Then starting from his bed, and seizing an old sword which hung over the bureau, he drew it with surprising quickness, and would have plunged it into his own bosom, had not Selgrave prevented the fatal

blow. The struggle was desperate; but the Baronet's strength was at last exhausted, and he sunk lifeless upon the floor.

In having thus preserved Sir George's life, his infamous deluder was perhaps induced, from the apprehension of losing his own; for at the moment the sword was drawn, his conscience told him that its point might with more justice be levelled at himself; nor had he time to decide upon the Baronet's motive. In his present miserable situation he could not, however, on any pretence leave him, and immediately rung the bell. By the unremitting attentions of Morrison and his wife, who were not slow in obeying the summons, and the rest of the servants being

being assembled, our hero was gradually restored to his recollection.

The morning was now far advanced, and he was, soon after his recovery, visited by Dr. Harlowe, the physician who had attended Sir Ashby in his last moments. How gladly would he have confided in this worthy man, but the season of humiliation was not yet come; the malignant and turbulent passions were yet to be expunged from his breast, and he was still to make retribution for his blindness, his ingratitude, and his infidelity.

At the Doctor's earnest request, Sir George consented to take a draught which he prescribed for him, and to remain within doors the whole day. He,

in return, promised to dine at the Abbey.

Selgrave already repented of his folly in having originally proposed this visit to the Abbey. In accomplishing his end, which was the examination of the western apartments, he began to see difficulties. It was evident the Baronet's mind was not, as at London, so well tuned to the business; it had been weakened by the intervention of some awful and interesting circumstances; the mildness of sorrow now, more than the scowling moroseness of indifference and misanthropy, sat upon his brow, and his general behaviour was more circumspect and consistent. As no time, however, was to be lost, he resolved to propose the examination the first convenient opportunity.

Darnley

Darnley and Melbank had gone out early on a coursing party; and Selgrave having promised to join them, the Baronet was left by himself. This was a fair opportunity for him to examine the apartments of the Abbey in every direction; but those he more than ever dreaded, yet longed to inspect. Morrison was accordingly summoned to accompany him. The habitable part being first examined, Morrison conducted him to the northern gate, which he said led to the great staircase, and to all the chambers contiguous.

“Now, Sir,” observed he, “if there be any person concealed in this division of the Abbey, we shall find him out, be he who he may. I have locked all the doors leading to the breakfast parlour, so it

it is impossible for him to elude our search that way."

The Baronet was silent, looked dejected, but said nothing. After the strictest scrutiny, no person was to be seen. Everything remained in the apartments as Morrison had left them, both up and down stairs. In one, particularly gloomy and spacious, was a picture of the Baronet's grandfather. He gazed upon it with great emotion. It was the look, the expression of those features which had appeared to him in his dream; he shuddered, turned back, and abruptly quitted the room.

As they were ascending a small spiral staircase that led to the great one in the center of the Abbey, Sir George's foot slipped, and he fell down several of the stairs.

stairs. Except a trifling bruise on his knee, from the sharpness of the stone, he was not at all hurt; but looking to see what had occasioned the accident, he took up part of a letter. What was his surprise and consternation, when the same hand-writing which had, on a former occasion, made so deep an impression upon his mind, met his view! For some moments he wanted courage to proceed; and his guide, attributing his dismay, and the sudden paleness that overspread his countenance, to the fall he had received, anxiously asked if he was much hurt. The Baronet made no reply, but carefully putting up the paper, desired Morrison to go on. They now ascended the great staircase, and continued their scrutiny through every apartment with
great

great perseverance ; but nothing appeared out of order.

“ You see, Sir,” said Morrison, “ that your apprehensions were groundless ; though I cannot account for my stupidity in leaving the door of any apartment open in my last survey ; we will be sure this time, however.”—Then locking the door of the great chamber in the gallery, as he had done by every other room they had examined, they came to that from which the Baronet and his companions had supposed a groan had issued the preceding evening. This they also examined and secured, as they had done the others.

“ Now, Sir,” observed Morrison, “ if we find this door open again, I will agree with

with your friends that the devil must have a finger in the pie."

To all these observations the Baronet replied not a word; but being come to the breakfast parlour, which concluded their search, he sunk into a chair, and remained for some time in a deep reverie. Morrison, still mistaking the cause, renewed his enquiries concerning the fall he had received, and asked if he would have any thing applied to the bruise.

Sir George, instead of answering the question, pulled out the paper he had taken up, and beckoning his servant to approach, held it before his eyes.

"Do you know that hand, Morrison?" demanded he, solemnly.

Morrison

Morrison hesitated a little, but it was not a pause of embarrassment ; nor could his master discover any traces of evasion in his countenance.

“ I certainly, Sir, have seen the hand before,” replied he ; “ and if I rightly recollect, it is Mr. Fordyce’s.”

“ The apartments we have just examined,” continued the Baronet, “ were, you say, shut up during my father’s residence at the Abbey ?”

“ They were, Sir ; and even in Sir Marmaduke’s time but one or two were ever made use of.”

“ It is not probable, then, that Mr. Fordyce could ever have seen much of them.”

“ I think not, Sir, except once, perhaps to satisfy his curiosity.”

“ And

“ And he has never been here since his departure with me ? ”

“ Never, Sir ; or if he has, he must have come invisibly.”

“ By Heaven ! I think he has then, or you have deceived me ! ”

“ As there is truth in heaven, Sir, I never did, nor will deceive you : to my knowledge he never has been here, and I solemnly believe he never has.”

Sir George was now more perplexed than he had ever been. It was clear to him, both by Morrison's manner before and after this conversation, that he was innocent of any deception. His wife only remained to be examined ; and, to prevent the possibility of any collusion, she was immediately summoned, and asked nearly the same questions that had been

been put to her husband. Her manner and her answers were equally unembarrassed, but no less unsatisfactory to her master.

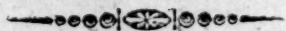
Sir George now, having previously dismissed his servants, ventured, for the first time, to read the fragment, which had been so mysteriously thrown in his way. From the contents of a former paper he had in a similar manner taken up, he expected some fresh instance of cunning and perfidy would be disclosed, not relative to himself, but to his father; since it was obvious that this must have been part of an old letter written at the Abbey previously to their knowledge of each other. He scarcely had strength to peruse what follows:—

“ My

“ My last spark of hope is almost ex-
 “ tinguished ! Wretched man ! When
 “ thou mightst have caught Virtue in
 “ thy arms ! when she would have led
 “ thee back to innocence and peace, thou
 “ not only didst reject her offer, but
 “ wouldst have profaned her sacred
 “ temple !—Alas ! he runs towards the
 “ precipice, vice leads the way, and the
 “ malignant passions pursue. The awful
 “ commission——” [Here were some
 “ words blotted out.]—“ if in thy bosom.
 “ Oh my friend !”

Here Sir George, with trembling hands,
 turned to the other side, but all was
 blank.

CHAP.



CHAP. VII.

THE events of the morning did not greatly contribute to restore the Baronet to his spirits, when the company met at dinner; nor could Dr. Harlowe, who regarded him with an anxious attention, compliment him on his good looks. On the subject of the fragment he was silent. Unable to fathom the accumulation of mysteries that had, since his accession to his title, been attending almost every action of his life, yet not doubting their connexion

connexion one with another, and from the last, that Fordyce, whether a man or an angel, was in some way or other implicated, he sat ruminating upon some more determined plan of proceeding. There was something in the few lines he had read, which revived a hope he had long since ceased to cherish; they seemed to imply that Rosara still lived, and lived perhaps for him. But then again, that hope was crushed by his recollecting it was long after Fordyce had left him that he had become acquainted with Rosara, and that neither she nor her father had ever mentioned his name. On the contrary, he remembered her often telling him that her father, her brother, and her neighbouring friends excepted, she had not one male or female relation or acquaintance in the world.

These

These circumstances, warring with each other in his mind, rendered him at dinner gloomy and discontented. The rude and noisy mirth of his dissolute companions, prevented any impression which a quiet and rational conversation with Dr. Harlowe might otherwise have made upon it; and as that gentleman's age and profession was but ill calculated to render him a worthy member of such a society, he took an early opportunity to retire. The Baronet did not attempt to detain him. His mind had, in the morning, been tuned to the relish of a sober conversation with his father's old friend; but different were its agitations now. Debilitated then, it had now become resolute; but it was the resolution of disappointment and despair! Whatever might be the consequence, he hastily determined

determined to try at least if he could not loosen the chain of mystery that bound him.

The name of Fordyce, which had long been buried in oblivion, returned to his recollection, and in the most forcible manner. It appeared that he had been, and still was, by some unaccountable means, an invisible spy upon his actions: and the former letter he had taken up at his house in town, returned to confirm him in this idea, that he was yet to be made the dupe of successful villany.

Selgrave, who understood every transition of his countenance, was pleased to observe an alteration there, that indicated a return of his wonted thoughtlessness and indifference. He did not, however,

think it safe to propose so soon, the wished-for examination of the forbidden apartments; and as the consequence of this proceeding was beyond his most distant conception, he judged it would be most prudent to defer it till the last moment of their stay at the Abbey, when they would be prepared to leave it at a minute's warning, should any thing extraordinary result from the trespass.

The bottle now went round. Darnley and Melbank, who were never deficient in promoting its circulation, soon brought our hero to what they called his proper senses

“And pray,” observed Darnley, “how long, George, do you mean to keep us here? I begin to wax infernally dull,
and

and had as soon sleep in a sepulchre, as in the best room in your enchanted Castle."

"If one had a fine girl now a piece," rejoined Melbank, "it might be tolerable; but rot me if we could see a petticoat, or any thing like one, within ten miles of your estate this morning: could we, Charles?"

"Not one," replied Selgrave, "and I see no likelihood of any return of good fellowship among the tenants here, so long as the Baronet suffers ghosts and spirits to infest the neighbourhood."

"And how would your wisdom lay them?" demanded Sir George.

"How!" replied Selgrave, "why give your farmers' daughters a hop in the *western apartments*."

The Baronet started.

“Aye do,” exclaimed Darnley, “I’ll stay for that another day; but no longer, otherwise, for all the wine in thy cellar, Baronet. Melly and I were entertained last night for three hours by a chorus of owls, sent I suppose by mother Morrison, to lull us to repose.”

In this kind of conversation the evening glided away. Selgrave’s hint, however, had made a more forcible impression on his friend’s mind than he expected.

Old Morrison now entered to prepare a card table, and lay the cloth for supper. At whist, Darnley and the Baronet were no match for their two cronies, who contrived to win every rubber; and the
losers

losers sat down to a late supper, indifferent to the loss of fifty pounds each. It was near four o'clock before they separated: Morrison was then summoned, and each retired to his chamber.

Being left alone, Sir George proposed to the old butler that they should examine the next room, and see whether the door leading to the great staircase remained secure.

"There can be no question about it," replied the old man, instantly approaching the chamber. "Your Honour saw that I double locked it this morning; and unless you and your friends have been playing some trick——"

"We have not," answered Sir George; "but I have a strange curiosity to be

now assured that the door remains as we then left it."

"Then it may soon be gratified," rejoined Morrison, opening the first door with an unembarrassed air.

The Baronet immediately advanced with a candle, whilst the second was *creeking upon its hinges!*

"No, villain!" vociferated he, "you shall not escape!" impetuously rushing forward, with an intention of securing the person he thought was making his retreat. The door was wide open, and the great staircase and gallery appeared full in his view; but nothing was to be seen.

Morrison, who stood behind, caught hold of his master's arm, or he would otherwise

otherwise have fallen ; and it was some minutes before he came to his recollection. The good old man, though equally astonished and alarmed, had a greater command over his reason ; conscious of no sins, he feared no danger, and begged that his master would retire to rest, and defer all further enquiry till the next day.

“ By heaven and hell,” exclaimed Sir George, “ I will be satisfied this instant ! You, or your wife, must know of this ; it is impossible you should not be privy to all the impositions which have been practised upon me, in order to destroy me. But I will be revenged ! Begone ! leave me this moment, unless you will confess——”

“As my God is to judge me,” interrupted Morrison, in a solemn and pathetic manner, “I am not only ignorant of this, but of every circumstance that has happened here, to give you uneasiness!”

“Let us see if all the other doors are shut,” continued the Baronet, advancing.

Morrison followed in silence, and the northern apartments underwent a second, and, if possible, a stricter examination, but without effect.

“If I had not carried my keys with me the whole of the day,” observed Morrison, as they ascended the great staircase on their return, “I should have suspected foul play.”

“Let

"Let us examine the lock," replied Sir George; "perhaps the door has been broke open."

"That is impossible, Sir, or one of us must have heard the noise. Besides, the only entrance to that chamber has this day been closely watched, both by my wife and myself."

The lock was, however, examined, but found entire, and fitted its key as well as ever.

"Heaven only can account for this mystery!" exclaimed Morrison, with unaffected astonishment.

"Perhaps," returned Sir George, "I may not be able to wait its intervention. Look to it, old man, and have a care how

you are the cause of driving me to extremities."

Then, with a gloomy brow, he sullenly stalked to his apartment. The state of the Baronet's mind, deplorable as it was, prevented the further intrusions of fancy: rendered almost callous by the various shocks of surprise it had received, oppressed nature sunk under them, and it was late in the afternoon before he arose from his bed. Morrison was immediately summoned before him, and again exhorted to confess his knowledge of the mysteries of the Abbey, including the forbidden apartments.

"Have you," said the Baronet, "never had the curiosity to explore the wood behind? Did you never see any body disappear
appear

appear at your approach to that part of the Abbey?"

"As there is truth in Heaven, Sir, I never did," replied Morrison. "I have been repeatedly—indeed I go almost daily into the wood, and sometimes very near the western entrance; but I have never seen even a footstep; and the trees and brambles are so shot up, that the bowers are almost quite obscured. In short, Sir, I think I may venture to say, that since your departure with Mr. Fordyce, no living creature but myself has ever been within a hundred yards of the spot."

Dr. Harlowe at this moment entered the room. He seemed a little shocked at the altered looks of the Baronet. A settled paleness now overspread his countenance; and his eyes, once so expressive,

had lost entirely their lustre. Morrisom withdrew.

“ I called, Sir George, to enquire after your health,” said the Doctor; “ but I am sorry to observe symptoms of illness, that will, I fear, surpass the power of my prescriptions. Something preys upon your mind; till that be made easy, I can be of no service to you.”

It now occurred to the Baronet, and for the first time, that Dr. Harlowe, who had been an old friend of his father's, and a constant neighbour, might know something of his affairs, and give him some clue, by which he might unravel the mysterious events of his life. The thought produced a momentary gleam over his countenance; and pressing the
Doctor's

Doctor's hand, he desired him to sit down, and answer him candidly a few simple questions.

“How long, my dear Doctor,” demanded he, “had you known my father prior to his death?”

“Not longer than the period at which he came to reside at the Abbey.”

“Did you ever, in the course of your conversation with him, discover any eccentricity of character? And have you never at any time heard him speak of the Abbey, or of any thing extraordinary attached to it?”

“Really, Sir George, these are questions that very much surpriseme:—Never; your father's character always appeared to me scrupulously correct and natural, his temper even, and his heart benevolent.

He

He was a man of great judgment; his decisions were generally the result of long deliberation, though his imagination was lively, and his perception acute. But I think he excelled in forming opinions of other people. From their manner and discourse, he would generally discover their particular failings and merits; but though he possessed the distinguishing ornaments of a well-educated man, and was in some respects a child of Fancy, he was not an eccentric one; and if he was ever led away by enthusiasm, it must have been from motives of benevolence."

Such a description of a once beloved father, and of a father he had almost determined in the nicest point to disobey, filled Sir George's heart with the keenest anguish.

anguish. His feelings were with difficulty suppressed.

“ You speak of Sir Ashby, Doctor, like a friend who really loved him ; and I feel grateful for your praise. Yet, after all, men even of the greatest penetration may sometimes be deceived in one another. My father, you say, excelled in discovering the real workings of the human mind ; he could not therefore have been made the dupe of knavery.”

“ I do not think it possible.”

“ Pray, Doctor, at what period of Sir Ashby’s life did you first see Mr. Fordyce ? A man, you well know, in whom he placed the most implicit confidence ?”

“ I think it was about sixteen months before the good Baronet died. Mr. Fordyce arrived at the Abbey a long expected friend ;

friend ; and I have frequently heard your father mention him as having been the companion of his travels through France and Italy."

" And from the time he made his appearance here, to that which terminated my father's existence, he never quitted him?"

" I do not think he ever did."

" Do you think, my dear Sir, that Mr. Fordyce's character is as easy to be described as Sir Ashby's?"

" I think, Sir George, that no man, with moderate powers of discrimination, could well mistake him : a gentleman more to be respected for his *moral* principles, than admired for his social virtues. Deep thinking and sorrow seemed to have disqualified him, indeed, for society altogether ; - but his heart rejoiced in the
happiness

happiness of his fellow-creatures, and his benevolence was unbounded. Soured by misfortune, his temper was not perhaps always so even as Sir Ashby's; and his reserve might frequently have been construed, by those who knew him little, into austerity."

Sir George sighed deeply.

"I should be thought impertinent, my dear Sir George," continued the Doctor, respectfully taking his hand, "if——"

"I understand you," interrupted the Baronet; "you see I am inwardly shaken—you see the disorder of my mind; but, Sir, I find you cannot remove the anxiety that oppresses it, and therefore——"

"I fear,

"I fear, Sir George, your *friend* has of late been too scrupulous of——"

"What friend? whom do you mean?"

"I mean the person we have been speaking of—Mr. Fordyce. Are you not often together?"

"Has he lately told you that we are, Doctor?"

"My profession, Sir George, obliges me to remain in my own neighbourhood; and I have not, in consequence, been able to see my old acquaintances in London for some time."

"But his profession, I presume, does not prevent him from visiting his friends in the country?"

"Perhaps not;—but he has not been here since his departure with you."

Morrison's former asseverations were here so positively confirmed, that the Baronet could not suppress his astonishment. The conviction of that gentleman's having been, and of still being in, or about the Abbey, was the only circumstance that could in any way account for what he had seen and heard therein; and that conviction falling to the ground, left him without the most distant supposition. Tormented, beyond bearing, with the suspense he laboured under, he started from his seat, resolutely determining to explore that instant the forbidden apartments. Selgrave entered at the same time, and Dr. Harlowe took his leave.

"Whither away so fast, Baronet?" demanded he.

"To

“To put an end to my anxieties, and unravel these mysterious absurdities!” replied Sir George, petulantly.

“How! Do you mean to examine the western apartments?”

“Instantly!”

“I applaud your resolution: but we shall not now have time; dinner is on the table, and as we are to set off to-morrow, let our scrutiny be the last thing we do?”

“Pshaw! dinner!—Well, then, after dinner; to-morrow my resolution may cool.”

This was what Selgrave feared, and he immediately acquiesced. The evening was dark and forbidding; a gale had been approaching from the eastward, and howled along the battlements of the Abbey.

Abbey. Notwithstanding our hero had fortified his resolution by frequent applications to the bottle, and his companions were more than usually boisterous, the blast at intervals seemed to warn him of some dreadful calamity that would attend his broken promise; and even Selgrave looked serious.

At length the Baronet introduced the subject for the first time to Melbank and Darnley. He explained to them the nature of his obligation as it was connected with Fordyce, and then asked them whether they did not think that that gentleman's conduct, which was well known to them, made the breach justifiable?"

"Certainly,"

“Certainly,” was the general voice.

“Oh rot it,” added Darnley, “let us steer to the west by all means; we can’t have a better wind, for it blows due east, and we shall scud famously before it.”

“A pretty thing indeed!” observed Melbank, “that a man may not examine his own premises!”

“Come on, then,” exclaimed Sir George, with an expression of desperate determination.

Morrison that instant entered the room.

“Morrison, bring hither a couple of lanterns.”

“Lanterns!” exclaimed the butler, with surprise.

Our

Our hero's mind was not now prepared either for interrogation or explanation.

“What does the old dotard stammer about?” continued he, furiously. “Be-gone, and obey me!”

Morrison withdrew. Sir George now recollected that to the door leading to the western apartments, there was no second key, and his heart recoiled at the idea of forcing it open. A thought now occurred to him that if the apartments were examined by his friends, his curiosity might be fully gratified, and his promise to his father remain unbroken. Though to a reasonable mind this would instantly have appeared a mean evasion, yet the Baronet rejoiced in the prospect of his wishes being accomplished, without injury to

to his *honour*:—immediately he made the proposal, and stated his reasons.

“Nonsense!” observed Selgrave;
“you are too scrupulous by half.”

“For my part,” said Darnley, “I expect nothing but to be smothered by bats; so I and Melbank, if you like, will be the sacrifices, if you two will promise to bury us.”

Melbank, who had drank more wine than any of them, said that it was all one to him whether he had to fight with bats, or the devil; “for d—me, George,” continued he, “if I would not go to the devil for you at any time!”

Morrison now returned with the lanterns, and it was finally agreed that
Melbank

Melbank and Darnley should go armed with proper instruments of force; that they should examine every apartment, not forgetting the tower and long gallery, and minute down every thing they might hear or see; that Selgrave should stay and keep watch with the Baronet, and that Morrison should be the conductor through the wood.

Whilst these arrangements were making, Sir George's eye was stedfastly fixed on the old butler's face; but grief and anxiety were the only feelings he could trace there. He seemed desirous of expostulating with his master; but, as if conscious of his inability to persuade, he remained silent.

"Where's your wife?" demanded Sir George.

"Below, Sir," replied Morrison.

"Call her."

Mrs. Morrison soon made her appearance.

"Where are the rest of our servants?"

"They have been gone to bed, Sir," replied the housekeeper, "these two hours."

"Well, Mrs. Morrison, I must beg you to stay in this room till your husband returns; and, Morrison, remember you conduct these gentlemen right."

A sudden blast of wind now shook the adjoining rooms, and died away in hollow

murmurs

murmurs along the battlements. The Baronet shuddered.

“ This way, gentlemen,” said Morrison.

“ Damn it,” observed Melbank, as Morrison unbolted the great door of the Abbey, “ ’tis as dark as Erebus !”

“ Erebus !” replied his companion, “ who the devil’s he ?”

Melbank’s reply was lost in the rushing gale, and the door closed with violence.



CHAP. VIII.

OUR hero had sent for Mrs. Morrison to prevent the possibility of any private conversation passing between her and her husband on this present occasion; but her unembarrassed manner satisfied him that whatever deceptions might be practising upon him, she, as well as the old butler, was entirely innocent of them.

The present interval was more fraught with anxiety and dread, than any other period of his life had been. The evasion
he

he had been guilty of, now struck him in a light approaching to cowardice; and he reproached Selgrave for having acceded to his proposal.

“ I set my face against it,” replied Selgrave, “ in the first instance; what could I do more?”

“ They have not been gone ten minutes,” continued the Baronet, rising hastily from his chair, and moving towards the door; “ I may yet be there time enough.”

“ You will not be able to proceed without a light, Sir,” observed Mrs. Morrison; “ and there is not another lantern in the Abbey.”

“ I’ll try what’s to be done, however,” replied Sir George, rushing forward, and opening the door.

"*Tremble!*" exclaimed an awful voice from the adjoining room.

The Baronet remembered to have heard it once before, and shrunk back aghast.

Selgrave, who, of all his companions, had been alone made acquainted with the singular interruption at Bexfield, remained for a few moments motionless in his chair, whilst the good housekeeper clasped her hands in silence. At length the former making a resolute exertion, flew to the spot from whence the voice had proceeded; but the chamber was empty, and he found the door leading to the great staircase not open, as on a former occasion; but as Morrison had left it, fast locked. Something like conscience

smote

smote him on this occasion ; nor could he disguise the tumult of his mind on returning to the breakfast parlour.

Sir George had sunk into a chair, where he remained in a state of listlessness, little short of stupefaction. Selgrave had now so far recovered himself, as to renew his examination with more deliberation ;—accordingly taking a candle, he entered the chamber a second time. He pried into every corner, in hopes of discovering some kind of pannel, or trap, from whence the person who spoke might have escaped ; but not the smallest aperture or crack appeared. After a fruitless search, he returned a second time to the breakfast parlour. The Baronet started at his entrance.

“Who’s there?” cried he, wildly. At that moment the great door of the Abbey was unlocked, and Melbank, Darnley, and Morrison made their appearance. In the faces of the two former was depicted the greatest consternation; in the countenance of the old man some degree of surprise was also visible; but the workings of a guilty conscience had no share in his emotions; his face was unflushed, and his looks and aspect unruffled.

“Gracious Heaven!” exclaimed Sir George, recovering his recollection, “for what further trials am I reserved?”

Morrison for the first time betrayed some degree of alarm. “You look disturbed, your Honour; Mr. Selgrave too

too looks embarrassed ; surely you have heard nothing ?”

Selgrave started from his seat. — “ Why !” exclaimed he, “ have you ? Melbank ! Darnley ! why you look petrified ! Speak ! Tell us the result of your scrutiny. What have you heard, and what have you seen ?”

“ Oh, curse me !” replied Melbank, “ if I can tell ; but I know what, if the devil is’nt at the bottom——”

“ Pshaw !” interrupted Selgrave, “ what folly and absurdity ! Do, good Mr. Morrison, explain this, and be brief.”

“ I would willingly, Sir,” said he, “ explain every thing I have heard and seen since my master’s arrival at the Abbey, if it were possible ; but God knows that I am innocent of the least artifice that has been practised.”

“ But to the point!” continued Selgrave.”

“ Aye, aye,” rejoined Darnley, “ come to the point at once, that we may be off. I would not stay another hour under these villanous battlements! Why the *Castle of Otranto* is a joke to them.”

“ Damnation! go on!” interrupted the Baronet in an accent of frenzy, and addressing Morrison.

“ I shall, Sir,” replied the old butler, meekly. “ You may remember, Sir, that the western apartments are surrounded by trees so interwoven one with another, as to render the way almost impassable——”

“ Well,” cried the Baronet, impatiently, “ proceed!”

“ Well,

“ Well, Sir, the darkness of the night greatly increased this difficulty ; and had not the wind been blowing directly from the east, I should not have been able to keep my light in. We had just gained the arch, behind which is the entrance to the western apartments, when we all distinctly heard a long and piercing groan ! It seemed to be at a distance, and died away in the gale.”

“ ’Twas a troubled spirit I hav’nt a doubt,” interrupted Darnley.

“ Egad ! perhaps ’twas the old Baronet himself,” added Melbank.

Sir George sat motionless in his chair, and Morrison proceeded.

“ We now hesitated whether we should continue our scrutiny, or defer it till it

was lighter; but Mr. Melbank was for the time present, and we ascended the steps of the door opening to the long gallery. Having tried all my keys in vain, your two friends advanced, Sir Géorge, with their crows, and proceeded to break open the door. The first stroke re-échoed along the gallery, and a dismal pause succeeded. Mr. Darnley was about to repeat the blow, when an interruption, not less strange than terrifying, drove us from our station. An awful voice, whether in the air, or proceeding from within, I cannot positively say, pronounced the word "*Tremble !*" At the same time casting my eyes towards the tower, I distinctly saw upon the top a human figure, which pointed in a menacing manner towards the east."

Here

Here Selgrave for the first time looked alarmed. Mrs. Morrison lifted up her hands and eyes to heaven ; and Sir George remained absorbed in terror and wonder.

“ Your Honour is greatly disturbed, I perceive,” continued Morrison ; “ but why should you be so ? If this mysterious warning be supernatural, which even now I know not how to believe, we have at least attended to it.”

“ The door then remains unbroken, and the apartments unexplored ? ” interrupted the Baronet.”

“ They do, Sir.”

“ To be sure they do,” said Darnley ; “ Melly and I are no match for devils.”

“ In what space of time,” continued Sir George, addressing himself to Morrison,
and

and more calmly, "did you get from hence to the western apartments?"

"Why," replied Morrison, "it might be about ten minutes, for we were obliged to walk very slow and cautiously."

"And you proceeded to break open the door immediately?"

"Yes, Sir, immediately."

"It was about ten minutes after you were gone," continued the Baronet, solemnly, "that I attempted to follow you, but was withheld by the same awful voice, and the same awful warning!"

"Damn it!" cried Melbank, rising from his seat, "that's a hum, isn't it, Georgy?"

"'Tis true, by Heaven!" replied our hero.

"God's will be done!" added Morrison, devoutly laying his hand upon his heart.

The

The morning now burst in upon them, but no one thought of retiring to rest. The Baronet continued for an hour in the deepest meditation ; he was at a loss what resolutions to form, or in what manner he could proceed in unravelling these mysteries. He shuddered at the idea of a second attempt being made to break open the door, though he had a fine day before him ; and any thing like deception must be discovered. Even Selgrave gave up the contest, and was the first to propose returning to London.—“ I cannot help owning to you, Sir George,” said he, “ that I feel very much confounded by the circumstances which have lately taken place, and that it may perhaps be as well to pursue your scheme no further, till you have received better advice than I am able to give you.”

“What can I do?” replied Sir George.

“Suppose you make it a public concern,” continued Selgrave; “the law might take the examination of so very mysterious an affair into its own hands, and honourably liberate you from all responsibility.”

“More evasion;—no, that I’ll not do.”

“Then sell the Abbey.”—Sir George started.—“Why not,” continued Selgrave; “after what has happened, you can never think of residing in it, or ever visiting it again. *Part* of it belongs to another, but the law will force the person to make good his claim; and how is he to do this? It was only given in trust for you, and at a certain period to be restored to you again. This trust the claimant has deserted. Let it be known
by

by a public advertisement, that you mean to dispose of the Abbey, and the estates attached to it ; and if, at a certain given time, Mr. Fordyce does not come forward, he renounces all further right or title to any part thereof."

This advice the Baronet seemed to like. " To be sure, if Fordyce be publicly summoned to come forward," observed he, " and appears not, what blame can possibly attach to me?"

" None in any shape," replied Selgrave, " though consequences the most fatal should attend the transaction."

In acceding to this proposal, the Baronet found himself relieved from the greater part of the load which oppressed him ; and though his intention had been to
violate

violate his sacred promise to his father, he took credit to himself for having obeyed the awful warnings he had received.

About one o'clock the Baronet and his friends prepared to leave the Abbey, on their return to town. Previously to his departure, Morrison and his wife were cautioned not to reveal any of the extraordinary things they had seen and heard; and that if they disliked their situation, the Baronet told them they were at liberty to quit it. To this the old butler boldly observed, that neither himself nor his wife were conscious of having committed any offences to draw upon them the chastisement of Heaven: that they feared nothing for themselves, and were as happy to stay as before. This point being adjusted, and Morrison ordered to write word if any thing new should

should occur to alarm them, or renew their suspicions, the Baronet got into his chaise, and the party proceeded on their journey to the metropolis.



CHAP. IX.

WE return now to Miss Inglefield, whom we left in her chamber, tormented by a conflict of contending passions. Her female confidant, to whom the Baronet had addressed his last speech at parting, was not slow in communicating it to her mistress, with some aggravating additions which, considering the capacity of the reporter, will very readily be excused.

excused. It was plain from this speech, delivered as it was in so public a manner, and with so much acrimony, that the Baronet was not only jealous, but that he seemed anxious to detect her with her lover, that he might, with some appearance of justice, discard her, to make room for her rival. This was a supposition she could not bear to reflect upon; and irritated beyond measure at the new insult she had received, she began meditating plans of deeper revenge than the mere sharing of her favours with Lord Benfield; during which occupation she received the following epistle from that Nobleman.

“ Dear Lucy,

“ I cannot live without thee. I have ordered my attorney to draw up the

the

the settlement for thee we talked about; so come and take it without loss of time. I know not how thy present *cher ami* may relish thy retreat, and curse me if I care: but this I know, he will be a most unreasonable animal, if he cannot find a sufficient excuse for thy flight from Gerrard Street to Grosvenor Square, and from a broken Baronet to a Peer of the realm.

“Thine for ever and ever,

“BENFIELD.”

Unspeakable were the first transports of her heart, on perusing an epistle so conformable to her utmost wishes. To be received the mistress of a Nobleman of rank, to enjoy an immediate independence, and leave her present protector

so completely in the lurch, were subjects of savage triumph to her; yet her quiet departure she considered as a very insufficient retaliation for the fancied insults she had received from the Baronet. The idea struck her that he might, on the contrary, be glad of an event which would directly open an easy accommodation for her rival. This suggestion instantly excited her indignation; and blinded by those turbulent passions which are the constant attendants upon vice, she formed the desperate resolution of robbing the house of every valuable article that had been entrusted to her care. To facilitate the business, and lest conscience should interfere, she had recourse to a Jew, who had on many other occasions been her friend, and who immediately paid her what she considered as
an

an equivalent for the plate, &c. &c. which she secretly made over to him. So insatiable was her revenge, that she scarcely left the Baronet a change of linen or clothes. This matter being settled to her satisfaction, she broke open and examined Sir George's escritoir, which he had carelessly left behind; not with an expectation of finding any thing valuable there, but merely from a wish to detect some secret correspondence with her rival, that might justify the operations of her jealous rage. Alas! she found more than one copy of a letter, written in his most soft and winning manner, and addressed to Rosara; one besides, out of the very few he had ever received from her—an epistle he had, in his most dissipated moments, frequently flown to for a relief from the pangs that tormented him.

him. These letters, in the first transports of her indignation, she instantly destroyed; and in searching for more, discovered in a private drawer Bank bills and cash to the amount of a thousand pounds, the whole of the Baronet's present stock of, ready money, and which he had from time to time delayed placing in his banker's hands. A difficulty now arose, which she had not, in her desperate anxiety to be fully revenged, taken into consideration; how was she to accept of Lord Benfield's settlement, or appear as his mistress, and escape the law's detection of the present robbery—a robbery of all others the most flagitious? A little reflection convinced her it was impossible, as she had already sold part of the property she had stolen. It was not too late, perhaps, to recal the Jew,
and

and compromise with him for a restoration of it: but this might subject her to insult and exposure; whilst by pursuing her present plans, though it would not make her so independent as Lord Benfield's settlement, yet it would amply gratify her revenge. After some little pause, she seized upon the money, packed up a few necessary articles, and having called a coach, and previously dispatched her maid on an errand, proceeded to the Bank, turned her notes into cash, hired a post-chaise, and arrived at Dover the next day. A few hours conveyed her to Calais, and left her in secure possession of her booty.

Such was the situation of Sir George's domestic affairs, on his arrival in London late in the evening. As he approached his own house, accompanied only by

Selgrave, his other friends having left him, he began to anticipate the satisfaction his mistress would evince at his appearance, forgetting at that moment his jealousy; and the image of Rosara having been previously effaced from his mind by a tolerable portion of wine, he arrived in better spirits than he had for some time experienced.

On the maid's opening the door, her agitation was so violent, that the candlestick fell from her hand. The Baronet had been of late so accustomed to surprise, that he took little notice of her perturbation; but Selgrave, whose suspicions were never more awake, began to suspect all was not as it should be.

“What's the matter, Susan?” exclaimed he; “are you ill, that you tremble so?”

“No,

“ No, Sir, not ill—but I hope my master—my *mistress* is — well—her journey no doubt has been of service—where—but—Oh dear me !”

“ What the devil’s the matter with the woman ?” interrupted Sir George, as he descended from the chaise.

“ No, she’s not there !” continued Susan, looking in ; “ then all is lost, and I’m undone for ever !”

The poor woman was so overcome by this conviction of Miss Inglefield’s treachery, (for she had been trying to attribute her sudden departure to some message from Sir George), that if Selgrave had not been standing close behind her, and caught her in his arms, she must have fallen with her head against the pavement.

An explanation now took place, and the enraged Baronet vented his curses and imprecations on her, on Selgrave, himself, and all the world. Unable to join the search, he sat sullenly in the parlour whilst it was making, and heard, with an indignation he could but ill suppress, that the whole of his plate and money had been stolen.

“ But my letters,” suddenly recollecting *that* which he so dearly prized ; “ they could have done the strumpet no good. Where are they ? fetch them ! ”

“ Pshaw ! ” replied Selgrave, “ what signify the letters ? We should lose no time in endeavouring to regain your property.”

“ Damn the property ! ” interrupted Sir George, furiously, “ if she has destroyed *that* letter — ”

Then,

Then, as though unable to endure the thought, he darted out of the room, followed by the attendant fiend, who had been the cause of all his misery. He broke his escritoir to atoms, as if there remained a possibility that some fragments of her dear hand might still lie concealed among the scattered pieces. He traversed every room in the house in frantic disorder, but in vain. Every paper had been burnt to ashes. We will close the scene which followed. Description cannot paint the agony of his mind. Selgrave endeavoured to pacify him. Reproaches were all the thanks he received; and at last he left him under the torture of some of the bitterest moments his vices had ever doomed him to experience.



CHAP. X..

DURING the two months which succeeded the disaster related in the last chapter, our hero's vexation met with little or no abatement. Selgrave, who beheld his debts accumulating, his health declining, his temper soured by misfortune, and his once elegant and enlivening conversation dwindled into gloomy invectives upon all mankind, began to think it would be wise to commence his final attack upon the last prop that sustained him, namely, the Abbey. Agreeably to
the

the resolution which he had adopted in consequence of his false friend's advice, the estate was soon after advertised for sale, and Mr. Fordyce publicly called upon to stand forward within a stated period, to assert any claim he might legally, or otherwise, be able to produce to any part of the property; or failing in this, be content to wave it altogether. It was whilst this business was pending, that the Baronet found himself suddenly reduced to his last guinea, and without the power of flying to any resource for ready money. For the first time he began to feel the pecuniary loss he had sustained through the treachery of Miss Inglefield, but he had delayed his enquiries too long. The poor maid Susan was the only person he could have brought to a public examination; but her conduct had been so open, and her grief so sincere, that no

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suspicion

suspicion could attach to her. Rendered desperate by his disappointments, and having reason to dread the worst consequences from the repeated clamours of his creditors, he dispatched a servant for Selgrave.

As vice gradually throws off the mask of delusion, and appears at last in its true deformity, so Selgrave had, by slow degrees, divested himself of that servility and insinuation which he had lavished on the Baronet in the days of his prosperity, and began to wear the character most congenial to his nature—the bold, unfeeling, sneering villain. His unhappy friend had more deeply involved himself than he had imagined ; and he saw that, after the heavy claims of his creditors had been discharged from what the Abbey would probably produce, very little would

be

be left for him to prey upon, and scarcely enough to support Sir George in common necessities of life.

The steward, since the disposal of Bexfield, had resigned his situation, and Sir George had entrusted the management of the Devonshire estate to an attorney. Selgrave, not having been consulted in this arrangement, pretended to be offended with the Baronet for his want of confidence; but in reality, it was only with a view of laying the foundation of some dispute, that might justify a separation from him for ever. Brooding over this resolution, he received Sir George's summons with an insolent indifference, well suited to his intentions.—“Tell your master,” replied he to the servant, “that I am at present engaged in business, but that I shall be at home from ten to

twelve to-morrow morning, if he has any thing to say."

Sir George, though rendered irritable, had never yet been humbled by calamity. The present reply, however, to his message convinced him that his dignity had deserted him, and that he was no longer an object to be respected. He recollected the little altercation he had lately had with Selgrave.—“But why should this rankle in his heart,” thought he, “when I have, on *former* occasions, used much harsher language, and attached terms the most opprobrious to him?”

Confounded, amazed, and enraged at the contemptuous answer he had received, he started from his seat, snatched up his hat, and was about to sally forth to demand an immediate explanation, when
 he

he was stopped at the door by Selgrave himself. He had been running, and was almost out of breath when he entered the room. The Baronet resumed his seat; and collecting, for a moment, all his former dignity, made a motion for his servant to withdraw. Selgrave had now recovered himself, and without waiting for Sir George to commence the conversation, began as follows:—

“ I hope, my dear friend, I am come time enough to prevent your servant from delivering a reply to your summons, that you must otherwise think a very impertinent one.”

“ You are not, Sir,” replied Sir George, haughtily: “ your explanation, therefore, if you please?”

“ I am sorry it has so happened,” rejoined the other; “ but believe me, it is

all a mistake. Your message was delivered when I was really engaged on very urgent business; and having an appointment with a gentleman, who said he would send his servant about the same hour to remind me of it, I mistook your William for him, and in the heat of my passion at being so unseasonably interrupted, returned the answer you have received."

Though this story was very unlikely, and Selgrave had forgotten that, by referring to William for the precise words of his answer, the lie must have been detected, the Baronet, nevertheless, appeared satisfied with the apology, and began reproaching him in gentler terms, for having so long absented himself from Gerrard Street. Selgrave pleaded a press of business, and the subject dropped.

It will now be necessary to account for a change so sudden in Mr. Selgrave's deportment. William had not left him two minutes with the insolent reply above alluded to, when the person employed to manage the sale of the Devonshire estate, entered the house with an account that he had found a purchaser, who was ready to snatch it from the hands of the auctioneer, to whom the Baronet had determined to consign it, by giving the sum of thirty thousand pounds for it without more trouble.

Selgrave was not more astonished than delighted with this information. The price so far exceeded his most sanguine expectations, that he foresaw a very considerable sum of money would remain for the Baronet, after the full discharge of all his debts; and whilst his avarice,
which

which could only be exceeded by his cruelty and ingratitude, was still to be fed, it was against his maxim to suffer his unfortunate victims to enjoy the scantiest remnant of their shattered fortunes. Rising hastily from his seat, he desired his agent to abstain from calling on the Baronet till the following day, when he would meet him in Gerrard Street; then making what haste he could, he repaired to his friend in the manner we have before mentioned.

“ Well,” continued Sir George, after a pause, “ what news from our agent, Charles, regarding the Devonshire estate? The time we gave to Mr. Fordyce expired a week ago, but the gentleman has not made his appearance.”

“ He cannot therefore establish any legal claim, and chuses to keep aloof,”
replied

replied the other; "our agent will call, no doubt, in a day or two, and I hope with good news."

Selgrave was aware of the impolicy of trusting the Baronet too soon with the true state of his affairs; his conduct, in that case, would not have appeared disinterested, and at present it was his plan to be the true, unbiassed friend. He knew Sir George wanted money; but he also knew it would be most repugnant to his feelings to confess as much;—assuming therefore a look of distrust, he continued—

"I say I hope, because I have my doubts as to the probability of your selling it well, or indeed at all. Ready money is, just at this period, a scarce commodity; and though the lands and tenements belonging to the Devonshire estate are good,

good, the situation beautiful, and the soil productive, yet the Abbey itself is by no means an enviable dwelling-place. Spacious and gloomy, half gone to decay, and the only habitable apartments constantly requiring repair—these considerations, I fear, will considerably lessen its intrinsic value; and you will be obliged to pay dear for the depredations of time, and the caprice of fashion;—however, purchasers may be found; in the meantime, my friend, I hope our long intimacy will apologize for my taking the liberty to offer whatever pecuniary assistance you may immediately want. The loss you have sustained by the ingratitude of an infamous woman, (I shall never forgive myself for having introduced her to you) presses, I fear, rather heavier upon you than you originally expected it would; at least if it
does

does not, we have not been so mutually confident in each other as we were wont to be."

The Baronet's countenance brightened at this speech:—he had not lately been accustomed to his deluder's insinuation, and it now returned the more grateful to him, inasmuch as it wore every appearance of disinterestedness.

"I own, Selgrave," replied he, "that your suspicions are just; the sum which the jade stole, was considerable, and has left me rather in the lurch; your friendly offer, therefore, of a temporary loan, I shall gladly accept, on condition that you take my bond for the repayment."

"Not for my own satisfaction, Sir George," rejoined Selgrave.

"But

“ But certainly for mine,” continued the Baronet ; “ so let it be properly made out, and then I’ll trouble you for five hundred pounds.”

“ Pshaw, a trifle !” resumed the other ; “ let me make it up the thousand.”

“ Well, be it so,” replied the Baronet, in high good humour :—“ and, Charles, we must dine together to-day. I’ll send for Melbank and a few mad-caps more, and we’ll be jolly at least for an hour or two.”

This arrangement being agreed upon, the friends separated—Sir George to take a ride in the park, where, in spite of the busy scene before him, and the lapse of time, Rosara still pursued him ; and Selgrave to prepare an instrument, which was one time or another to gratify his pride, his malice, and his revenge.

CHAP..



CHAP. XI.

UNDER the dominion of rebellious passions, and exposed to the hourly machinations of a villain, the short period of three years from the time we concluded our last chapter, left Sir George Meriton, the sole prop of an illustrious and wealthy family, abandoned by the world, and buried in miserable obscurity. The tempestuous scenes of dissipation were at an end. The pride of birth, the attractions of person and education, the all-prevailing influence of riches, were

no more. No longer even in Gerrard Street must we now look for him ; but in the mean apartment of an obscure lodging-house, with only one faithful servant to guard his chamber from the intrusion of merciless creditors.

The produce of the Devonshire estate had lulled the deluded Baronet into a comparative state of happiness. Some of his heavier debts discharged, the smaller claims remained neglected ; and a new equipage, a more splendid establishment, a fresh mistress, and the gaming-table succeeded. At length the illusion vanished, and he suddenly found himself reduced to his last guinea, with no one resource to turn to—with a constitution almost effectually ruined, and in hourly apprehension of ending a pining and a dishonourable existence in a prison ! When

we

we add to these calamities the bitter reproaches of his conscience, the now inevitable loss of Rosara, and of every blooming expectation, we can hold him up no longer as the object of censure, but commiseration. Yet in the midst of his sufferings, and during the extremest anguish of his mind, he would sometimes think of the awful mysteries that yet seemed linked to his fate; and as no change could now happen for the worst, the reflection would sometimes dart upon his grief-worn mind a transient ray of consolation.

It was at this period that the clouds, which had so long obscured his reason, began to separate. Having been obliged to keep within doors, he had endeavoured to beguile the heavy moments by reading. The faithful William had procured him
books;

books; and, strange to tell, they were books of deep and persuasive morality. These he had read, and the divine doctrine of Christianity began to make an impression upon his heart.

Selgrave had not yet visited him in his new apartments. This was strange, that his dearest friend should be so long absent from him in his distress! He had been made acquainted with the Baronet's lodgings, with his misfortunes. Why did he not come to comfort and relieve him? William was summoned.—

“’Tis very strange, William,” observed the Baronet, “that my friend Selgrave has not yet called upon me: has he sent no message? Is there no note or card from him?”

William

William sighed. — “None, Sir,” replied he.

Sir George paused. — “Perhaps,” continued he, “he is ill; but then he would have sent me word.”

The Baronet was here interrupted by a post-knock at the door, and a letter was soon after put into his hand, which excited in his bosom the mingled emotions of surprise and indignation. He recollected the characters of his betrayer, Miss Inglefield; and supposing it merely contained an acknowledgment of her guilt, and an endeavour to extenuate her crimes, was about to commit it to the flames, when William interfered.

“Pray, Sir,” exclaimed he, “read it first; I am greatly deceived if this letter does not relate to *more* persons than one.

one. You were assigning just now a cause for Mr. Selgrave's long absence; perhaps this epistle may discover the true one."

Although the Baronet did not place much reliance upon his servant's conjecture, yet his curiosity had, by this time, got the better of his resentment, and he opened the letter; the substance was as follows:—

"By the time you receive this, much-injured Sir, my sufferings, at least in this life, will be no more. That they have atoned for my manifold transgressions, and that my prayers may be still received at the throne of Mercy, is the only hope that enables me to write a confession to you, that will, I fear, rend your generous heart.

heart. Yet this confession is necessary to save you, if it be not too late, from the further deceptions of a villain, whose rule of life has been to support the cause of vice in its blackest deformity, and sacrifice the noblest victims at his shrine. Seduced by him from the house of my father at the age of eighteen, he found me an easy conquest, for I had not yet learned to consider the moral obligations of life as the boundary of happiness; and pleasure, in all its branches, seemed to have little connection with either virtue or vice. Nurtured as I had been in a cottage, and educated among rustics, the distinctions of society were totally unknown to me; but Mr. Selgrave soon taught me to covet the pleasures of a gayer sphere, where my beauty might command those distinctions, and my spirit and disposition be no longer sub-

jected to the checks of a vigilant and careful parent. The vain flatteries of the world, its assumed respect, its short-lived applauses, bestowed indiscriminately where either fortune, connection, or beauty may have attracted them—these were the allurements which he knew I could not withstand : such were the attractions my inexperience was inadequate to cope with; and though the natural purity of my mind had taught me to reverence the sober principles of virtue and religion, and to listen, with a calm and pleasurable attention, to the weekly instructions of an excellent minister, yet all the milder satisfaction of a self-approving conscience, the consideration of a future reward, and the esteem and approbation of a Heavenly Master fled like a dream before the sudden glare of a *worldly* paradise. This paradise was not twenty miles

miles off; a lover devoted to my service was ready to attend me to it; to introduce me into the circles of splendour, where the crown of dissipation would be placed upon my head, and vassals of every description stood ready to confess my power, and offer their allegiance! Short was the struggle of my weak reason. I yielded to the power of my betrayer, and sold myself to vice and misery for ever. Two years succeeded each other, without an abatement of his attentions to me; but the third year he abandoned me to the world, leaving me without the means of even a temporary subsistence. I was not then quite so hardened in iniquity, but I might have been prevailed upon to return to peace and repentance; but the thorn I had placed in my father's heart had brought him to the grave of sorrow, and my other relations had left their

native village, and were scattered abroad where I had no means of finding them.

“ My beauty at this period ripening with my years, and my figure becoming more striking, Selgrave was once more induced to offer me his protection. In the first moments of my indignation I could have spurned him from me ; but he came armed with his usual weapons of defence, and the character to which his villany had reduced me, had taught me the inefficacy of complaint, and the necessity of humiliation. Not many months after our reconciliation, I was introduced to you. I shall not comment upon the baseness of this proceeding: after what I have already told you of my wretched life, you must but too deeply feel it. Preparatory to this introduction, he bound me over to divide with him
regularly

regularly the spoils of my beauty; after disclosing to me the little peculiarities of your temper, and instructing me in the art of inveigling you out of your money, and leading you to those precipices of extravagance, from which you were daily falling. In all this plunder, Selgrave had more than an equal share; till at length having received some flattering assurances of support and protection from another keeper, which promised to place me in an independent situation, and being moreover careless of any discoveries he might make to you, I refused any longer to supply him with the moiety of my allowances, and he soon saw the inutility, (for he knew of my correspondence with Lord Benfield) of remonstrance or reproach.

“ It was about this time that you, Sir George, first gave birth to my jealousy. Oh Sir ! you know not how bitterly I lament the injury you must have sustained through my perfidy and ingratitude. You named your Rosara ; you placed me at so humiliating a distance from her superior attraction, that my pride took the alarm, and I began to meditate, not merely plans of retaliation, but revenge. Your suspicions of my infidelity, implied in your message to me by my servant, in the heat of passion, and before Selgrave and his dissolute companions, confirmed me in my purpose ; and your journey into Devonshire opened to me an opportunity, I did not then hesitate to employ. I might at this time have fled to Lord Benfield, but my revenge would then have remained unsated ; and I even suspected you would rejoice to find I had so commodiously

commodiously made room for my rival. I need not relate what followed. For some days I felt a fiendlike gratification in reflecting upon the troubles you must have undergone—upon the agony of your mind in having been deprived, not only of a large sum of ready money, but of letters I am confident you must have valued more than your life. Had I kept those letters, I might now, by restoring them to you, lay some claim to your forgiveness; but in the transports of my jealous fury, I committed them to the flames. The justice of Heaven, which equally dispenses its rewards and punishments, was not slow in pursuing me: as I had been treacherous myself, so was I treacherously dealt by; and Oh Sir George! by that very serpent which had originally corrupted me, and whose deadly sting blighted the fair promise of virtue

and happiness. Selgrave, without consulting you, contrived to trace my route to Calais, and dispatched one of his infernal crew to detain me there. This specious villain (you know him well, Sir George—'twas Melbank) induced, no doubt, by the sum of ready money in my possession, offered me marriage if I would confide in him; swore he had long entertained the sincerest affection for me, and that as to the opinion of the world, he despised it. It was some little time before I yielded to this delusion; but at length, convinced by his repeated oaths, and protestations of truth and love, I rashly resigned myself and my ill-gotten wealth, to his honour. We were to have been married the following day; but the wretch having secured every thing I had in the world, stole away from me the same evening, and I saw him no more. I need
not

not paint to you the agony of mind that followed this miserable deception. Again I found myself cast upon the world, without one friend to whom I could apply for assistance; in a foreign country, and bound to remain there, lest I should be overtaken by the violated laws of my own. Whilst ruminating upon what course I should pursue, a letter was brought to me from Melbank, in which the villain presumed to justify his conduct. In this epistle he confessed that Selgrave had instructed him how to act in the late affair, and that they had agreed to share the booty. He likewise informed me that I had brought the misfortune upon myself, by having, in the first instance, declared war against my seducer, and broken an agreement originally made, to divide with him the profits resulting from my connection with you. This charge I

could not confute ; but little did I think, or expect at the time, a revenge so cruel would be so soon successfully gratified. So true is it, Sir, that our crimes are generally ordained by Providence to be the instruments of our punishment.

“ During my short acquaintance with Melbank, he unfolded a dark story about you. He confessed that you had, at an early period, fallen an easy prey to the machinations of Selgrave, and that your fortune had been gradually torn from you by means the most scandalous ; that the large sums which you had occasionally lost at the gaming-table, you had lost to sharpers, subservient to his beck, and with whom he regularly shared ; that to Selgrave you had at first sacrificed your principles, and had by him been led into a love of indolence and extravagance.

But

But, Oh Sir George! I did not need this information from his confederate in villany. Frequently has this monster been himself the announcer of his own crimes; and I have heard him, when intoxicated with wine, and divested of his usual caution, boast, among his colleagues, of the superior success of his stratagems, and that poor Meriton was adding daily laurels to his fame. When I was first introduced to you, I shall never forget his caution; it convinced me he had acquired the most perfect knowledge of your disposition, and could mould it to any purpose he thought proper.—‘Only make it appear,’ said he, ‘that you are disinterested in every thing you do, and he will subscribe to your advice and wishes without the slightest consideration of the consequences; but if you suffer him to see you are insinuating yourself

into his good graces by too hasty an acquiescence in every proposition and opinion, you will speedily lose both his affection and confidence.'

" Oh Sir George! if this warning come not too late—if the viper you have so long nourished in your bosom, has not entirely robbed it of its peace, and you can still hope to feel the emanation of returning virtue, how would the assurance of such a change revive my sinking spirits, and sweeten the last bitter moments of my miserable existence!—Yes, Sir, the late gay and beautiful Miss Inglefield is now perishing under the pressure of want and disease!

" From Calais I returned to London, whither I was driven by my desperate sorrows, and torn by the keenest remorse,

to yield to that justice I expected was pursuing me. How was I astonished to find that no information had ever been lodged against me, and that I was free to pursue my own inclinations! At first I thought of seeking vengeance on the villain Selgrave; but the shameful love of life returning with a sense of security, I gave up all ideas of taking such a step, well aware that the recrimination could not in the least affect him, without crushing me. Cast once more upon the town, I was obliged to move from sphere to sphere, till I was reduced to the lowest degree of abject prostitution. Five days ago I was seized with dreadful spasms, brought on by repeated acts of intemperance; and I was but an hour ago informed by my surgeon that a mortification had taken place, and that it was impossible I could live four-and-twenty hours!

He

He spoke the truth ; for the excruciating pains I had before endured, eased soon after, and I resolved to devote my remaining time to his service, whom I had most offended :—my motive is pure. I have some assurance of pardon from Heaven, for my repentance is sincere ; and I look forward to the mediation of a merciful Saviour, who reads the secrets of all hearts, and will extend his divine mercy to save me from perdition !—Farewel for ever ! I feel the hand of Death upon me ; but sincere contrition has robbed it of half its terrors. That you may finally escape from the fiend that has been pursuing you, to the enjoyment of peaceful virtue, and that faith to which I fear you have so long been blind, is the last dying prayer of

“ Your repentant friend,

“ L. INGLEFIELD.”

At

At an earlier period of his life, the Baronet could not have patiently read the above letter to a conclusion; but enervated as his mind had been by perpetual shocks, the present blow was not so severely felt: yet astonishment, indignation, and pity alternately occupied his breast. William perceived that something extraordinary had been communicated to his master. He saw a tear start in his eye, as he sorrowfully reperused the latter part of the epistle in his hand. At length wildly starting from his seat, he commanded his faithful servant to call a coach. William was too well acquainted with his master's temper, to venture any expostulation, and a coach was presently at the door.

"William," said the Baronet to him, mildly, as he returned with the intelligence,

gence, "I have every reason to be satisfied with your fidelity to me; but I must insist upon it that you do not hereafter presume to give an opinion, or pry so curiously into all my actions as you have lately done. I have received some intelligence of Mr. Selgrave, and I am now going to his chambers. Withdraw for a moment."

William bowed, and obeyed; but not without casting at his unhappy master a glance, which too clearly spoke his suspicion of some dreadful intention.

Sir George now rushed to his bureau, from whence he took a brace of pocket pistols, which having carefully concealed in the private pocket of his great coat, he again summoned William, to whom he repeated his caution not to follow, or
attempt

attempt to pry into his present purposes ; and then descending the stairs, he stepped leisurely into the coach, and ordered it to drive to the Temple.



CHAP. XII.

OUR hero, having discharged the coach, hastened to the apartments of his false friend, at the door of which he knocked three or four times, ere it was opened to him. In the servant who appeared, the Baronet recollected one of the trusty mastiffs, who had so successfully assisted him in carrying off his beloved Rosara. Scarcely could he suppress the first emotions.

tions this recognition gave birth to ; but immediately recovering himself, he demanded to see Mr. Selgrave.

“ He is not at home,” replied the fellow, in a surly and disrespectful manner.

“ Not at home ?” echoed Sir George, in an accent of distrust and surprise ; “ by Heaven, ’tis false ! I know he never goes out so early as this !”

“ I know my orders,” rejoined the other, “ and so good morning !”

He was abruptly shutting the door in the Baronet’s face, when, with a furious exertion, he rushed against it, and effected an entrance ere the porter could recover himself. Disdaining any longer parley with this wretch, he stalked sullenly to the door of the library, which he opened, and discovered Mr. Selgrave reading a
morning

morning paper over a cup of chocolate, with as much ease and apparent tranquillity in his countenance, as though he had not even the common imprudences of life to answer for. The intrusion was unexpected, and he arose somewhat abashed.

"I am sorry, Mr. Selgrave," said the Baronet, coolly, "to interrupt your meditations; but my business with you will very soon be dispatched."

"This formality, Sir George," replied Selgrave, "is, methinks, rather ill-timed."

"Perhaps not," rejoined the other, producing Miss Inglefield's letter. "Do you recollect this hand, Sir?"

"Come, come, Sir George," replied Selgrave, "I see your eyes are open to imposition as much as ever. But pray, what am I to understand by all this?"

"That

“ That you have been treacherous to your friend, and the murderer of a wretched woman, whose principles you originally destroyed, and whom you afterwards abandoned and robbed.”

“ Any thing further ?” asked Selgrave, with a contemptuous indifference.

“ But little,” rejoined the Baronet, producing the pistols, and bolting the door. “ I cannot yet accuse you of cowardice ; and though I am scarcely justified in treating you as a gentleman, yet I scorn to take the advantage your proper character gives you. Take your choice, Sir !”

Selgrave paused.

“ You hesitate,” resumed the Baronet.

“ I do,” replied the other ; “ for though I equally scorn, on the present
insulting,

insulting occasion, to wait for such proofs as may warrant your accusation, and my atonement, yet having affairs of importance unsettled on my hands, I could have wished a longer notice of your present intention had been given me."

"Well, Sir," replied the Baronet, withdrawing his pistols, "name your own time and place."

"To-morrow morning at six, in Hyde Park," replied the other.

Our hero instantly withdrew, and Selgrave returned to his chocolate, without betraying the smallest emotion. His usual cunning had not indeed, on the present occasion, failed him. He well knew that the incensed Miss Inglefield would expose him to the Baronet one time or another, and that such an exposure would subject him to his deluded friend's

friend's resentment;—at the time, therefore, that he dispatched Melbank after her, it was more with a view to gain her over to his purposes, by making her in some measure dependant upon him, than absolutely to plunder, and leave her altogether destitute. The entrapping her by an offer of marriage, was entirely the scheme of his *meritorious* associate, and its success was by no means pleasing to Selgrave, as at that period he was making daily depredations upon the produce of the Devonshire estate. Relying, however, upon Miss Inglefield's preference of life, to the gratification of her revenge, and knowing that she could not molest him without injuring herself, he continued in his career till he had effectually stripped the unfortunate Baronet of every shilling. The house in Gerrard Street was then deserted, and the lodgings before mentioned,

tioned, taken by Sir George; and in these lodgings Mr. Selgrave thought proper to drop all further acquaintance with him; and of course from that period became indifferent as to any thing that might be revealed, either by Miss Inglefield, or any other person, against his character. He knew that nothing could be positively brought home to convict him in a court of justice, and he was too opulent to dread much from the opinion of the world: his only apprehension was personal chastisement from the Baronet, for refusing to give him the satisfaction of a gentleman; and as he expected every day to be called upon for an explanation, or that perhaps some discovery of his villany would be made, he had prepared himself to face the impending blow. A message, however, and not the Baronet in person, was what he had expected; for
he

he was aware of his situation, and that he could not, at the present time, quit his apartments without the chance of encountering bailiffs. The shock, however, was but momentary, for he presently recollected he could evade an immediate duel; and the intention once made known, he was equally certain of preventing it altogether. No sooner, therefore, was Sir George gone, than he sent for his attorney, and gave him full instructions to proceed against the unfortunate Baronet without loss of time. He produced the fatal bond which had been given a few years before as security for a thousand pounds, and it was thus employed to secure his own wretched life from the just resentment of his injured friend; and to complete his full career of treachery, cruelty, and ingratitude, by sacrificing him to the lingering and uncertain miseries

miseries of a prison. The attorney withdrew to execute his dire commission. A writ was obtained, and the bailiffs instructed where, and at what hour in the morning to station themselves.

Sir George, in the meantime, returned to his lodgings, and was welcomed by the faithful William with every demonstration of joy. So pleasing a flatterer is hope, that in the midst of his deepest misfortunes, he had not entirely abandoned the idea of once more beholding his friend Fordyce; but he was now to cherish the thought no longer. A few hours might probably decide his fate in this world for ever; and the tyrant Honour stood ready to exact from him the most fatal proofs of his allegiance. He sunk into a chair, and endeavoured to beguile the tedious moments by reading. He

took up a book ; it was one he had never before seen : he opened it—it was *Sherlock upon Death*. He started up with surprise, and rang the bell. William entered.

“ William,” exclaimed he, with more anger in his countenance than he had of late shewn, “ I perceive you have been inattentive to my commands, and are acquainted with what has passed between Mr. Selgrave and me.”

“ No, Sir, upon my life !” replied William.

“ How comes it then, Sir,” continued the Baronet, “ that you have placed among my books so particular a work as this ; and that you have taken the opportunity of my going out just now, to do it ?”

“ What book, Sir ?” rejoined William.

“ No

“ No equivocation. Did you not place this book here?”

“ No, Sir, I never saw the book in your room before.”

“ Who did then?”

“ As I have a soul to be saved, I don't know, Sir!”

“ Begone!” exclaimed the Baronet; “ find out the woman of the house—it must belong to her. But how came it in my room?”

William withdrew, and presently after returned.

“ I assure you, Sir,” said he, “ as I am an honest man, I know not how this book came in your room, and the woman of the house is as ignorant about it as myself.”

“ Well,” replied the Baronet, after a pause, “ ’tis no matter; you may withdraw.”

William withdrew, and Sherlock was again examined. After some consideration, he interpreted this strange incident into a good omen.—“ Fate,” thought he, “ cannot afflict me farther, and every fresh change of fortune I undergo, must be for the better.”

With these ideas he sat down to the perusal of those pages that had been so strangely recommended to his attention. The more he read, the more he felt himself interested: it reconciled him to death, but not to eternity. Was there an eternity? Selgrave had told him no: but Selgrave had proved himself the worst of villains. But after all, what had these reflections

reflections to do with the laws of this world? Could the pious Sherlock, supported by the sublime illustrators of Christianity, have detained our hero from his appointment? No; though his reason might have been convinced, he would have been one of the last to submit, in such a cause, to the fleeting derision of mankind.

CHAP. XIII.

THE period of the Baronet's sufferings was now drawing to a close. Misfortune had, though by slow and trying degrees, purged the grosser particles of vice from

his heart, and qualified it to receive, once more, the impressions of virtue. But he had yet to combat with the loss of every hope and absolute despair; and this was too much for his weak reason to sustain. He had not the Christian's fortitude to contemplate, unappalled, the interminable horrors of a damp and desolate prison, where, without books or conversation, reflection would return with an aggravation of misery he had never yet experienced. The world was still the object of his desires, and he yet looked, with a faint and distrustful eye, to the paradise beyond it.—Sir George did not resist the law. The writ against him was carried into execution with the most cruel punctuality; but what were the emotions of his soul, to find it was for a debt of a thousand pounds, and at the suit of the implacable Selgrave. In an instant he recollected

recollected the bond which had decided his fate, and was conducted to prison in a state of torpid despair.

The first dreadful conviction that shot across his mind, on being left alone, was the impossibility of ever being able to discharge the debt for which he had been arrested, and that he was now in a prison for life. No wonder, then, that a flush of joy animated his faded features, when he recollected that his pistols still remained in his great coat pocket. His determination was sudden, and might have been carried into immediate execution, had not the opening of the prison door recalled his departing reason. A decently dressed man made his appearance. The Baronet surveyed him with scrutinizing regard. The stranger turned pale, and hung his head.

"You may perceive, Sir," said Sir George, "that I have no recollection of you. What are your commands with me? Be brief, for impatience is the privilege of misery!"

"I think," replied the stranger, in faltering accents, and with tears trickling from his eyes, "I should not any where else have remembered you, *my dear master!*"

Sir George started. The features of the faithful Lovel were in a moment familiar to him, and he approached, and pressed his hand with great cordiality.

"And now," resumed he, "leave me, my honest fellow;—I do not enquire by what means you found me here, or what could prompt you to visit a master who once so grossly wronged you. You have,

no doubt, been in better service since, and have reaped the reward of your fidelity and honesty. Heaven prosper you with it, but do not intrude upon my sorrows: your presence can only open fresh sources of lamentable reflection."

"I came not, your Honour, with a design of disobeying your commands, but to convince you that I have no other wish to live, but to continue devoted to your service. In this purse, Sir, you will find a hundred pounds, which I humbly beg you to make use of for the present; it will furnish you with better apartments than these, and enable you to procure all the conveniences of life, till such time as I shall be able to bring the *monster*, who has thus injured you, to terms: believe me, Sir, I know the way."

"Lovel," replied Sir George, rejecting the purse with stern solemnity,

“attend to me, and for the last time; were the monster you allude to, inclined, either from fear or pity, to withdraw his claim, I would rather linger piece-meal in this dungeon, than accept the smallest particle of obligation from him;—as to the conveniences of life, and a better apartment than the present, they would be thrown away upon me: here my thoughts are best accommodated; you now know my sentiments, and urge me no further.”

Lovel bowed in silent dejection, and the Baronet's features relaxed into kindness.

“Yet, my faithful fellow, accept, for this generous proffer, your lost master's thanks and blessing; and as I know I can depend upon your zeal, come to me again in the evening, and I will deliver
into

into your hands a commission of the most serious importance to execute for me."

Lovel's countenance brightened at this intimation; and bowing affectionately upon the Baronet's hand, he withdrew, without uttering another word.

Oppressed as our hero was by an accumulation of misfortunes, and rendered almost frantic by his sorrows, yet the sudden appearance of his old servant Lovel, at such a time and in such a place, was as strange as unlooked for; and he could not avoid making it, for some time, the principal subject of his consideration. A slight glimmering of hope again returned to his disturbed mind, from this unexpected visit; and the demon that had a little time before suggested suicide, fled from him

overawed by the superior power of reviving virtue. He had been interested in the writings of Sherlock; he had put the book by chance in his pocket the night before. The present solitude was favourable to a renewal of his meditations, and he returned to them with satisfaction; his hopes grew brighter in every page. The man who had written this work, was convinced of the truths which regulated his actions, and to which he had been so sincere a convert; yet he had lived full of honour and happiness—he had died in peace, with cheerful resignation. Had this been the fruit of Mr. Selgrave's principles? Were Sir George's present sufferings unconnected with his habits of life? Had he lived full of honour, and could he die in peace? No: too plainly did experience shew him the reverse of this picture. He was now convinced he

had

had been miserably deceived, and that from the time he had lost Fordyce, he had been gradually preparing himself for his present situation.

The evening was bleak and gloomy. His solitary lamp shot a melancholy ray round his apartment, and his small fire was nearly extinguished;—still no Lovel appeared, and he became impatient. Another and another hour passed away; and to the hope which had a little time before silenced the throbbing sorrows of his heart, the deepest despair succeeded. Again the watchful fiend returned, and again the fatal-pistol was presented. At that moment he cast his eyes upon a page of Sherlock, which had just before made an awful impression upon his mind, and manfully dashed the weapon from him.

“Almighty Providence!” exclaimed he, inspired by sudden fortitude, “if the offences of my wretched life have not entirely excluded me from an appeal to thy divine mercy, let my present sufferings atone for them, and my sincere repentance find favour in thy sight! Turn from me the bitter cup of anguish, and save me from despair!”

The prison door was almost instantly unlocked. The Baronet turned his eyes; 'twas Lovel he expected to see; but the person that now presented himself was not Lovel, but (“Gracious Heaven!” he exclaimed, and sunk back into a chair) Fordyce!—An absence of thirteen years had little altered his expressive and graceful countenance; time indeed had made some encroachments, but with a tender hand, as though fearful of disturb-
ing

ing those awful characters of virtue that Nature had originally engraved thereon.

For some moments the astonished Baronet durst not meet the glances of his friend. Severe in rebuke, he imagined he beheld already the flashes of his indignant anger, and heard the bitter language of his stern-reproach. What then was the sudden consolation of his heart, when he ventured to view these dreaded features—when he beheld them impressed with the mingled emotions of friendship and compassion!

“At length,” exclaimed Fordyce, “you have conquered; the period of your sufferings is drawing to an *end*.”

A glow of tremulous joy illumined the Baronet's countenance, and his awful friend continued.

“Yes,

“ Yes, my friend, during the last few hours of your life, the struggles of virtue and vice have been most powerful ; under the pressure of the deepest affliction, and the most painful disgrace, the latter tempted you with the only means to get rid of both : the former submitted to your choice the belief of a divine intercessor, and the necessity of confiding in the wisdom of God, and supplicating comfort from him. You have submitted ; and now we will visit the *forbidden apartments*. The time is come when I can with safety exclaim, “ *You may now enter them !*”

CHAP. XIV.

THE strange sensations of hope and fear that now occupied our hero's mind, may be easier conceived than described. All the mysteries of his past life seemed now unquestionably to have been the work of Fordyce ; yet how could he, by any *human* art, have so well timed, and so variously performed them? Even his late appearance, at so awful a period, without any annunciation, and at the hour of midnight, seemed to declare him a being of a superior nature—an angel
in

in the semblance of his friend, that had been invisibly regarding every action of his life. He recollected, with trembling awe, that his beloved Rosara, when exposed to the ungovernable fury of his licentious power—at a moment, and in a place where no human assistance could be depended upon or expected, had called upon Heaven for protection, and Heaven had rescued her. By the same awful warning, at the same time, but at *different places*, were the *forbidden apartments* preserved from violation! Under these impressions, therefore, he remained in a state of silent obedience during the space of two days, in the house of Fordyce, neither enquiring how he had been discharged from his prison, or when they were to proceed on that eventful journey, which was to terminate all his anxieties.

Fordyce

Fordyce saw what was struggling in his heart, but said nothing. No topic of indifferent conversation was started by either; all seemed wrapped in mystery and silence. Sir George's reflections were, however, no longer the torments of his mind. Resigned to the will of Heaven, and solemnly convinced of the superiority of his mysterious friend, he betrayed no impatience to be gone; but confiding in the wisdom and goodness of that friend's heart, he regarded him only with veneration, and thought alone of comfort and peace under his roof.

The third day had now passed off, and the same silence had been observed. Fordyce had, as on the former days, been absent during the greatest part of the time, but returned rather earlier on the third evening, and found the Baronet
with

with the same tranquillity in his countenance, and with an eye that betrayed neither impatience nor suspicion.

“Thank Heaven!” said he emphatically, taking his hand, “thank Heaven, my dear Sir George, that has given you so much confidence—that has so purged your heart of those turbulent passions, which were originally the means of corrupting it. By submission, under every vexation and suspense, to the ultimate will of God, we can alone hope for a speedy and joyful issue.”

The Baronet only replied by bowing respectfully; and kissing the hand which held him, for the first time he observed that Fordyce was in *deep mourning*; he forbore, however, to make any enquiry, and his friend proceeded—

“*To-morrow*

"*To-morrow morning* the chaise will be at the door, which is to convey us to the *forbidden apartments*. Be prepared, Sir George; encourage your present disposition, and your father's wishes will be accomplished."

They now retired to their respective chambers, and the Baronet slept, under the impression of pleasing dreams, till morning. Rosara had appeared to his imagination, with beauty ripened by time, and with the same lovely and impressive countenance as when he had at first beheld her. From this delicious offspring of his fancy he awoke, and cast his eyes on Lovel. He was dressed in black, and carried upon his arm a suit of the same colour, which placing at the foot of the bed, were evidently designed for the Baronet.

For

For the first time, Sir George betrayed the trembling anxiety that laboured in his heart. Lovel he was not much surprised to see; but to see him dressed in mourning—having observed Fordyce in mourning the preceding evening, and now having a dress brought for him also—what could this portend, but some recent death, in which he was nearly and deeply concerned?

“Lovel,” faltered he, “that we meet again under the roof of Mr. Fordyce, gives me pleasure; but on *whose* account am I to wear this dress!”

“Dear master,” replied Lovel, “be pacified; I *dare not*, *cannot* tell you; but be assured that all your anxieties are approaching to a *period*.”

“Tell

"Tell me but this," exclaimed the Baronet, relapsing into impatience, "does my Rosara——"

Fordyce at that instant appeared, and Lovel instantly bowed, and left the chamber. Sir George sunk back abashed.

"You have not slept well, Sir George," observed he, gravely; "your looks and manner betray impatience. Come, make haste and dress yourself; we must be gone."

"I shall be ready immediately," replied the Baronet, and Fordyce withdrew.

Sir George entered the breakfast parlour soon after, evidently struggling under the greatest perplexity. He had equipped himself in the black clothes brought him by Lovel, but Fordyce took no notice

notice of the alteration they made in his appearance. Our hero was of course as silent upon this, as he had been upon all the other mysteries of his life; a child could not have conducted himself with more diffidence and submission before his austere parent. A solemn pause succeeded, during which a servant entered with chocolate. The Baronet turned his head—'twas William, the faithful William. He bowed to his master; but as if fearful of being questioned, hastily withdrew.

Fordyce now raised his eyes, which had been before fixed upon the fire, and asked Sir George if he were ready to go?

“As soon as you please, my dear Sir,” replied he; “I am perfectly ready.”

“But,” resumed Fordyce, “is your mind sufficiently prepared to receive, without

without murmuring, the just chastisement of Heaven, in the glorious confidence of a heavenly recompence?"

"I shall cheerfully submit," replied the Baronet, with a sigh, "to its awful decrees; and still bend with feeling gratitude for the grace of repentance, and the blessings of your returning friendship."

There was a mildness in Sir George's speech and manner that touched his venerable friend, and he withdrew to the window to conceal his emotion. Two carriages appeared now at the door. Fordyce immediately hastened to his desk, from which he took a *roll of paper*. Sir George started. He recollected the same, which had been entrusted to his friend by Sir Ashby on his death-bed.

“ The forbidden apartments can only be unlocked by this *key* !” exclaimed Fordyce. “ Come, my friend,” taking Sir George’s hand, “ the favour of Heaven sometimes extends to repentance even in this life.”

The Baronet felt encouraged, and they ascended the carriage, which rapidly drove off with them, followed by Lovel and William in a post-chaise. They halted the first night at a small, but neat inn, four miles from Blandford. Nothing material happened during their journey ; some indifferent conversation had taken place, but nothing relating to the mysterious visit they were about to pay. During supper our travellers were alarmed by some piercing groans, which seemed to issue from the room over their heads.

In

In a minute succeeded the voice of a person in delirious agony, exclaiming—

“ Oh horror ! take her away, let her not approach me ! Save me, save me from despair ! save me from *myself* ! ”

To Fordyce the voice of misery was an immediate summons. He started from his chair, and rang the bell. A waiter presently entered.

“ Tell me quick,” demanded he, “ who is it that is ill above stairs ? ”

“ A poor gentleman, Sir,” replied the waiter, “ who three days ago was overturned in a post-chaise, and received by the accident so dreadful a fracture in the leg, that it brought on a violent fever, which has been increasing ever since. Last night an eminent doctor from

Salisbury was called in, and prescribed for him; but notwithstanding the surgeon's favourable report of the fracture, he gave little hopes of his being able to subdue the fever."

"Conduct me to the chamber," exclaimed Fordyce, following the waiter out.

A long, and to Sir George, a painful pause succeeded. It was at last interrupted by another groan, which seemed to terminate the existence of the miserable sufferer. For near twenty minutes the most perfect silence ensued, and then Fordyce returned. Consternation was visible in the good man's countenance. Without shutting the door, he beckoned the Baronet to follow him, and they softly ascended one pair of stairs. He then turned solemnly round, and taking his

his friend by the hand, that trembled in his grasp—"One of the great duties of Christianity," said he, "is forgiveness of injuries!"

They then entered a chamber, where lay extended on a bed, in the agonies of an untimely death, the wretched Selgrave. Sir George shrunk back aghast. A recollection of his manifold wrongs spread a crimson glow upon his face; but the situation of the aggressor quickly extinguished every spark of resentment, nor could he conceal the emotions which his instant pity and compassion excited.

“ Seek not to suppress these sensations,” whispered Fordyce; “ they are the purest tributes of returning virtue. I have received the confession of this dying man : I have endeavoured to

M 3

impress

impress upon his mind, during an interval of reason, the vast and inscrutable extension of divine mercy to true, though late repentance. He called upon your name; he said he should die in peace, if he could receive your forgiveness."

"Oh let me speak to him!" exclaimed the generous Sir George.

Selgrave opened his eyes for the last time; he fixed them upon his injured friend, and a faint blush was for a moment visible on his pallid face.

"Oh God! God!" exclaimed he, in tremulous accents, stretching forth his hand, which the Baronet eagerly seized.

"If my sincere forgiveness," interrupted he, "can afford any comfort to these

these last bitter moments, take it, and with it my fervent prayers to Heaven, that you may there find mercy !”

The miserable Selgrave gently pressed Sir George’s hand.—“ Generous, generous man !” faltered he, “ I cannot fully atone for the horrid deceit, the black ingratitude I have been guilty of towards you ; but—but that angel” (and he pointed to Fordyce) “ has received from my hands some little expiation, and now I die con——” and with a last effort to kiss Sir George’s hand, he fell back, and expired !



CHAP. XV.

THE village clock was striking nine as our travellers drove up to the gates of the Abbey on the evening of the following day. The month was October, and the gale blew loud and bleak. The Baronet's sensations were indescribable. The prodigies which had before astonished and alarmed him, returned fresh to his memory, and he could not help casting at Fordyce, whose countenance he but faintly discerned, a look of painful apprehension. Twice was the bell rung ere any person appeared. At length the gates

gates were opened by a man with a torch in his hand, and clad, as were Fordyce and his party, in deep mourning.

“Heavens!” exclaimed the Baronet, whose surprise had now become insupportable, “is it a *funeral* we are come to attend?”

“Has death then such terrors in it?” answered Fordyce, descending from the chaise; “and is Sir George Meriton still in love with life and worldly vanity?”

“Never,” replied the Baronet, emphatically, “never do I wish again to quit this *sacred spot*!”

“Follow then,” rejoined Fordyce, “and speak not.”

Another domestic now appeared, dressed like the former. Sir George shook him kindly by the hand, and received the old

man's blessing. 'Twas Morrison. Being arrived at the great door of the Abbey, Lovel approached with a large key, which he gave into Fordyce's hand.

"Come, Sir George," exclaimed he, solemnly, "you are now to shew an example of fortitude and resignation. The time is come; we will visit the western apartments."

Sir George bowed his head, but was unable to speak. Morrison and William were now ordered to depart, and Lovel alone to proceed with the torch. Being come to the *arch*, the Baronet looked fearfully around. In every gust of wind he heard a groan, and every imperfect object wore a supernatural appearance. They now slowly ascended the steps leading to the entrance of the long gallery;

gallery ; and the Baronet casting his eyes towards the tower, the transparency of the painted glass casting “ a dim, religious light around,” indicated the performance of some solemn ceremony within. Fordyce now turned the key ; the door opened, he entered, and the Baronet followed with trembling steps. The mysterious apartments were now laid open to the Baronet’s view ; his heart sunk within him when he observed they were hung with black, and that only here and there was a solitary taper burning. Being arrived at the door of the tower which was to terminate their scrutiny, Fordyce paused, and clasping his hands, uttered the following pathetic and mysterious invocation.

“ Shade of my venerable friend ! I have obeyed thy injunctions—*Providence* has admitted thy virtuous expiation : the

heart of thy son is purified from vice, and is worthy to complete it."

A strain of exquisite harmony succeeded, and Fordyce opened the door of the chapel. Gracious Heaven! what sudden anguish smote our hero's heart, when he beheld, on what appeared to him a private vault, hung with black velvet, the following inscription—

SACRED TO ROSARA.

For some moments he stood motionless with astonishment and grief.

"Behold!" resumed the awful Fordyce, and pointing to the inscription, "behold the consequences of ungovernable passions! But those passions are now subdued,

dued, and resignation and repentance must atone for past transgressions."

"They must," replied the Baronet, with a deep and affecting sigh. "I do not murmur; to thy will, Oh Heaven! I bow, and acknowledge the justice, nay the mercy of thy sentence. Had my Rosara lived——"

"To Sir George Meriton, and his *vices*, she has long been *dead*!" interrupted Fordyce: "whilst they lived and triumphed in his heart, this monument has proved sacred to her, and has guarded her from violation;—but the spell is now dissolved; returning virtue calls her back to freedom and to life!"

Then throwing aside a black velvet curtain, which had before appeared a solid body, Rosara, the long lost Rosara, appeared

appeared in all her charms ; her venerable father supporting her on one side, and young Mr. Courtland on the other.

“ Rosara ! ” exclaimed the Baronet, running towards, and gazing wildly upon her.

“ Meriton ! dear Meriton ! ” replied she, and fainted in his arms !

CHAP.



CHAP. XVI.

*The Contents of the Manuscript, and the
History of Fordyce.*

SIR GEORGE MERITON and Rosara Courtland were married in the chapel of the western apartments. The venerable Mr. Courtland performed the ceremony, and Fordyce gave her away to his enraptured friend. The Abbey was once more the abode of peace, virtue, and happiness. Hospitality again adorned its threshold, and the blessings of the poor once again gave lustre to the name of Meriton. The

dark veil of superstition was rent asunder : the cheerful rays of truth once more illumined its battlements, and the song and the dance again resounded in the long neglected hall.

The Baronet now called upon his friend to fulfil his promise, and explain the mysteries which had been pursuing him through almost every scene of his mispent life. The prophetic secret which connected his father with Rosara was yet to be unravelled ; and he was yet to learn by what means his estate had been restored to him.

Fordyce answered his enquiry, by putting into his hand two rolls of paper.

“ Convinced, Sir George,” said he, “ that you are no longer under the controul

troul of your passions, that you are cleared from error, and that in the calm enjoyment of virtuous love you will find real happiness, no secrets shall longer be kept from you. The first of these papers is the same Sir Ashby, on his death-bed, delivered into my hands. How I have attended to the contents, my own history, from our memorable separation in St. James's Square, will amply explain; and Oh Sir George! let not a thought, bordering upon reproach, visit your father's memory: he, like yourself, subdued by the pernicious influence of custom, was once the slave of sin; but his atonement has been ample, and Heaven has wonderfully interposed to crown his virtuous wishes with success."

Sir George retired to his own private apartment, where, with eager curiosity,
but

but yet with the most reverential respect, he opened Sir Ashby's scroll, and read as follows.

THE MANUSCRIPT.

" When we parted at Paris, my excellent friend, in the full vigour of our youth, and with every blooming prospect around us, you little suspected that the man you had taken to your confidence, whose correspondence you had solicited, and whose conduct and principles you were pleased to commend—that Sir Ashby Meriton was, at that painful moment, a dissembler and a seducer. Yes, dear Fordyce, spite of the virtuous example shining in every action, in every sentiment of your mind—ungrateful to Providence that had marked you out to be
my

my counsellor and companion in the slippery paths of prosperity, I left a memorial of my vicious passions behind, in the fate of Ellinor Cleveland. You may remember that young Mr. Cleveland was first introduced to me at a gala given by the English Ambassador. His conversation and manners, equally sensible and polite, engaged my attention, and I invited him to my house. You were of the party, and approved of my new acquaintance. The compliment was returned; I dined with Mr. Cleveland and his *sister*. Spare me, my friend, spare me the mortification of shocking your nature by a recital of particulars. Had Cleveland been better connected, or had he not been equally destitute of fortune, I might have been saved; but his was a family that claimed no alliance but to honour and virtue, and mine had, through
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ages,

ages, been swayed by the distinctions of rank. What shall I say? Paris was the scene of tumult and dissipation. Miss Cleveland had a heart, and fatally for me, a generous one—open to credulity, and alive to flattery. I yielded to my evil passions, and seduced her. Stung with remorse—anxious, but unable to atone for my crime, I thought at first of disclosing my distresses to you; but I knew you would propose marriage as an expiation, and that my pride recoiled at. Unable longer to visit the worthy brother whilst conscious of having wronged him in the tenderest point, yet still more desirous of soothing Miss Cleveland's apprehensions by constant and affectionate attention, I was reduced to a dilemma the most painful I had ever experienced. But in this state of suspense I was not long suffered to remain.

A letter

A letter was brought to me one day, by a messenger breathless with haste. The direction was in my Elinor's hand, and I opened it immediately. It contained the following words:—

‘ DEAREST MERITON,

‘ Since last we met, in an interval of delirium, brought on by a violent fever, I betrayed you to my brother.—Fly, instantly fly from his vengeance, and take with you the dying prayers of

‘ Your affectionate

‘ E. CLEVELAND.’

“ Alas! dear Fordyce, you know my disposition too well to suppose I could obey Miss Cleveland's commands, though I would have laid down my life with pleasure, as a sacrifice for my offence. To
degrade

degrade my name by flight, was impossible. A second message brought me the fatal intelligence that she was no more! That her sudden death was occasioned by her anxiety for my welfare, I will not pretend to dispute; that her illness did not originate in my desertion of her, I call Heaven to witness. The furious Cleveland attributed both to my perfidy and ingratitude. Stabbed in the nicest point, expostulation, and even submission, were in vain, and the sword was the only satisfaction he would accept from me. We accordingly met; and after a severe contest, I was obliged, for the security of my own life, to sheath my weapon in my antagonist's bosom! His life was for some weeks despaired of; during which fearful period, my attendance and enquiries were unremitting. A conduct so disinterested made an impression on the mind of young Cleveland; and,

and, after various struggles, the natural benevolence of his heart triumphed over the rancour that had before possessed it. He summoned me to his bedside, and holding forth his hand to me—‘I am induced to think,’ said he, ‘that a man who has risked his life as an atonement for an injury, could not have been guilty of a base desertion of her he had bound himself to protect, though by unlawful means. Convinced of this, I rest satisfied for the original offence, and beg you to receive my forgiveness. A time may come, Sir Ashby,’ continued he, in a solemn voice, “when you may still be able to wipe away the disgrace you have brought upon an obscure, but till now an honourable-family.”

In another month he was permitted to leave his chamber. I ran with eager joy to congratulate him
on

on this pleasing event; but what was my disappointment to hear he had left Paris the day before, accompanied by one servant only. I would have pursued him, but knew not the route he had taken; nor could I divine the cause of his abrupt departure.

“ About this period I determined to revisit my native country. You would have accompanied me, Fordyce, but your connections in Paris rendered it necessary that you should remain there. My union with Lady Meriton put a temporary stop to our correspondence. You cannot forget the pleasure and surprise your unexpected appearance at Bexfield gave to all parties; nor the grief and disappointment we equally felt, on being told you were obliged to return to the Continent in another month, and that you

were

were apprehensive many years must elapse ere we could meet again. Little indeed did I suppose that the pride of manhood was first to pass away, and that the death of a beloved wife was to close the mournful interval. In the only pledge of our loves, my present son, I beheld the rise and progress of those destructive passions, which, but for a timely marriage, might have plunged me into deeper guilt. I felt my health declining. George was heir to all my immense wealth, but he was also the inheritor of all my imperfections with less circumspection, and without a Fordyce to curb the impetuosity of his temper. What could I do—how could I preserve this beloved son? A paralytic stroke deprived me at this period of the powers of reflection and consideration; but when somewhat recovered from a severe indisposition, I felt more

than ever the necessity of coming to some resolution concerning him; and it was at this time I received from you, my valuable friend, the intelligence that your venerable uncle was no more—that he had left you a fortune fully adequate to your most sanguine expectations, and that you should visit England when his affairs were settled.

“ The anxiety I had for so many years experienced respecting the fortunes of Mr. Cleveland, was now also suddenly removed by my hearing from a friend at Naples, that he was still living; that he had succeeded, on his marriage, to a very comfortable independence, and that he resided in London with his family. These concurring circumstances engaged me in a scheme which I have long fondly cherished, and now submit to you. The
safety

safety of a darling son, the honour of my house, may depend upon it; and my humble wishes to atone for past indiscretions, may, through Providence, be crowned with success. I had by me, exclusive of the Devonshire and Hampshire estates, ready money to the amount of sixty thousand pounds, the produce of some successful West-India speculations. From the habits of George, from the openness, the liberality, and the credulity of his disposition—but, above all, from the impetuosity of his temper, and his want of caution, and even common prudence on the most trifling occasions, I well knew that this part of his fortune would at least fall an easy and an immediate prey to sharpers, or be as speedily sacrificed at the shrine of pleasure and dissipation. I had frequently sounded him on the subject of marriage, and was

mortified, and even alarmed, at a kind of rooted antipathy he had imbibed (through what means I know not) to that excellent institution. Alas! what were my consequent apprehensions? That he would fall into the fatal *error* of his father, that he would even continue to be the *seducer* of unprotected innocence, and add another stigma to the House of Meriton, which neither time nor circumstance could wipe away! But these were not all my apprehensions. I had fatally nursed him in the lap of indolence and pleasure. Lady Meriton did not live to qualify that love of worldly dissipation which I saw growing with his growth, and strengthening with his strength, and which the acquisition of a title, and a splendid establishment, would but too fatally confirm. I resolved, therefore, to *conceal* from him this large portion of
his

his fortune, that it might hereafter prove the means of supporting him when he had learned to despise the follies and extravagances of life, and when he had imbibed a disposition to enjoy its real blessings—when in the school perhaps of vice, he should have known affliction, and an accumulation of misfortune should have shewn him the dreadful consequences of giving the rein to his passions, and yielding to the flattery of villains. This fortune, dear Fordyce, I now leave in trust with you; it is the last solemn request of your dying friend, that you apply it only in the cause of *virtue*—that you use it only to *reclaim the libertine*, and expiate his father's crime!—Cleveland has long been married; he has a family—a daughter beautiful and accomplished; by the union of our children, I wipe away my former injury! You will seek them

out; you will easily find them. But will the gay, the dissipated Sir George Meriton yield to this last solemn wish of his father's heart? He may mean it, he may strive to do justice to his memory; but his rebellious passions will prevail, and another *innocent* may be sacrificed at the shrine of seduction! Then, O! Fordyce! snatch her from the impending ruin, and let the *western apartments* be her asylum; till, overcome by the destructive pleasures of the world, my misguided son may wish he had never known it, or that he had never taught his heart to sigh for its enjoyments. Then, and then only, fly to his assistance; then let *him enter* those apartments, and in the arms of virtuous love find a shelter from all future woes: till then, let them be kept *sacred*: Cleveland will in vain preserve his child from the persevering attacks of the seducer;

seducer; he will live in perpetual alarm, and cease to enjoy the blessings of security. George will, in his wildest paroxysms of thoughtless pleasure, still hold *inviolable the injunction of his father*; for should he break *that* promise, he is not worth reclaiming: and I charge you, as you value my dying request, abandon him to his fate for ever.”—[Violent was the agitation of our hero’s mind whilst he perused this narrative; but at this place his conscience smote, and almost deprived him of recollection.]—“And now, dear Fordyce, farewell! With this paper receive the key of the forbidden apartments: they have been lately repaired, and rendered habitable. In the chapel you will observe a small crucifix; take it down, and a door, secured only by a spring attached thereto, will fly open; you will here find money and bills to the

amount I spoke of; the rest you know. I conclude my charge under the affliction of a severe illness. The hand of Death is on me; but I die content, satisfied with the guardian I have chosen for my son, and convinced that my utmost wishes will, sooner or later, be accomplished.— Lay it to your heart, and remember

“ASHBY MERITON.”

THE HISTORY OF FORDYCE.

With trembling anxiety Sir George now opened the other paper. The well-known hand, that had on former occasions filled him with trouble and dismay, now afforded him a satisfaction the most exquisite; since it was to remove all his doubts, unfold every remaining mystery, and fill his

his delighted heart with the warmest sensations of gratitude. He read as follows:—

“ It was not till a week after the last sad duties had been paid to my venerable friend, that I visited the western apartments; in which I found what I considered as Miss Cleveland’s legacy deposited. The tendency of your disposition was soon open to me, and I every day saw new difficulties arise, which were sooner or later to impede the progress of those impressions I wished to be indelibly engraven on your heart. Sometimes, indeed, your conduct and sentiments gave birth to pleasing hopes; but we had not been a fortnight in London, before they began gradually to fade away. Your intimacy with Selgrave was an
and N 5 insuperable

insuperable barrier to the farther advancement of my precepts, and I only thought of preserving you from the snares I too plainly perceived he was spreading for you. Alas ! the task became every day more difficult. I saw that, as the love of dissipation gained ground in your heart, your respect for me, and the calmer delights of virtue, became proportionably the indifferent objects of your attention.

“ I had pursued my enquiries after Mr. Cleveland from the first moment of our arrival in London ; but, to my great surprise and disappointment, they had hitherto proved ineffectual. I had written twice to Paris, to my agent there, who I knew had been upon the most intimate terms with that gentleman ; and he had, in answer to my letters, con-

firmed the account of his marriage, as given to Sir Ashby by his friend, stating, in addition, that he had signified his intention of residing in London, and settling in some mercantile line. Still my applications, both public and private, proved fruitless—Mr. Cleveland was nowhere to be found. Your father's excellent scheme thus baffled, I knew not how to act. You had taken Selgrave to your confidence again, and I plainly perceived he had been making a successful impression upon your judgment, by persuading you that you were acting upon principle. This conviction extinguished at once my last glimmering of hope. I knew that your heart being inclined to admit this fallacious opinion, your reason would not long hold out; and when summoned from you to attend a sick relation in the country, who had expressed

a desire to see me before he died, I anticipated the scene of folly I should witness on my return to St. James's Square. Then it was, Sir George, that I was fully convinced of your apostacy; then it was that I saw your morals were tainted, and that however you might still respect your father's friend, you would inwardly laugh at, and despise his principles. Convinced of this, nothing remained for me to do, but to pursue Sir Ashby's advice, and leave you to the enjoyment of your destructive pleasures. These I knew would soon lead you into scenes of misery; but I also knew it was only in such scenes you could ever learn to feel the value, and envy the votaries of virtue—it was only in such scenes you could ever be sensible of the delusions of vice. You may remember my parting words; I saw that they then made some
impression

impression upon your mind—‘I am bound to you by an indissoluble tie.’ You now know that tie; and when you thought me far from you, and were indulging in every excess dissipation could furnish for your destruction, I was privy to every action, and every intention. The honest and faithful regard, manifested on various occasions by your servant Lovel, first determined me to make him my confidant. He entered, with zeal, into my service; and satisfied of the rectitude of my designs, was indefatigable in his attention. I had taken a small house near Romsey, and not far from your own estate at Bexfield. In this my retirement, I received regular accounts from my correspondent, by which I was made acquainted with every thing concerning you. Lovel omitted not a single conversation, or a single engagement.

engagement. The first advices that called me into action, and from which I dreaded the most fatal consequences, was the circumstance of your first meeting with Miss Courtland. Your libertine passion for her, and ultimate determination to follow and seduce her—your whole scheme was made known to me long before it was carried into execution: and, trembling for the fate of the innocent Rosara, I set out immediately for Ches-hunt, with the intention of imparting your designs to the unsuspecting father, and of thereby defeating them altogether. But it is thou, Oh Providence! that orderest all things for the ultimate advantage of thy creatures, and in thy benevolence and wisdom, canst extract good from the worst of our vices and follies.

“ I was

“I was received most courteously by the worthy Clergyman; he was sitting alone, his lovely daughter being then on a visit in the neighbourhood. For some moments I was prevented speaking by a sudden interest I felt in contemplating features I was convinced I had seen before.

‘I am to apologize to you, Sir,’ said I, ‘for thus strangely introducing myself; but the urgency of my business renders form unnecessary: my name is Fordyce.’

“Courtland started, and rivetted his eyes upon me. I too was amazed, and was presently convinced I had stumbled upon some old acquaintance.

‘I think, my dear Sir,’ continued I, ‘we have seen each other before?’

‘Indeed

‘ Indeed I think we have,’ replied he.
‘ In—in,’ his voice faltered—‘ *Paris*,
I believe.’

‘ Gracious Heaven!’ exclaimed I,
rising from my chair, ‘ it is—it must be
Mr. Cleveland I behold!’

“ The good man was agitated—a pause
succeeded; it was a pause I knew not
how to interrupt, though our conversa-
tion, from so unexpected and extraordi-
nary a recognition, was likely to become
long and interesting. At length he broke
silence.

‘ Yes, Mr. Fordyce, I am that Cleve-
land, and I am most happy to see under
my roof, a man, whose virtues early
endeared him to all who had the pleasure
of his friendship. Ah, Mr. Fordyce!

had

had your example—But I am forgetting myself—Sir Ashby Meriton is no more!”

“ I felt an unwillingness to begin a tale, which was to revive old distresses, and create new ones; but the hand of Providence seemed to rest on the issue, and I proceeded. The story of the forbidden apartments, and the use to which they were to be applied; the consequent history of yourself, and the extraordinary meeting at the theatre; but, above all, your evil designs in consequence (omitting the manner in which you proposed introducing yourself), filled him with mingled sensations of gratitude, astonishment, pity, and indignation.”

‘ Oh Mr. Fordyce!’ exclaimed he, as I concluded, ‘ how am I sufficiently to thank God, who, under all my afflictions,
has

has so graciously vouchsafed to watch over and protect me! My only joy—my child—my Rosara might, but for this wonderful meeting, have fallen a sacrifice to a vil— Yet hold; he was the son of my repentant, my generous friend! And did Sir Ashby so nobly plan the *only* reparation! And could his son——?

“ I saw the conflict that was struggling in his bosom, and with your welfare still in view, thus interrupted him—

‘ I have already, worthy Mr. Cleveland, explained to you the purposes of our late friend. Nobly, as you say, has he bequeathed a legacy, to which an ample expiation of his fault is annexed; and difficult as I own the task appears, I do not entirely abandon the hope that a will so generous may be ultimately fulfilled.

filled. It is true that I have left Sir George to the full indulgence of his passions, and criminal course of life; but I look forward to the moment when the bitter consequences of vice and folly shall fall upon him, when the giddy phantom of happiness shall vanish from his eyes, and miserable reflection succeed every sensual gratification. Your lovely daughter may yet reclaim him—may yet save him from these trials: but should she not, remember, my friend, *the asylum* she may fly to. Suffer, then, an introduction to take place: confide in me for protection; and that all-powerful Being, who has already approved our cause, will crown it with success.'

“The worthy man regarded me for some moments with a look of mild complacency;

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placency ; at length, catching my hand with warmth, he replied—

‘ Yes, Fordycè, it shall be so—I will confide in you.’

“ I was now anxious to know his history, and the reason of his having changed his name, and taken orders. ‘ Both these events,’ replied he, ‘ are connected with melancholy circumstances. Sir Ashby informed you of my abrupt departure for Paris. I confess, although I had forgiven him, my pride so far prevailed as to determine me never to renew our intimacy ; and I saw no way of avoiding this, but by quitting Paris, and with my then slender fortune, retiring to some peaceful obscurity in my native country.

‘ I had

I had not been long in England, when chance introduced me to a maiden lady, of the name of Courtland. Miss Percival, her niece, united to an excellent understanding, and a tender heart, all the blooming graces of my Rosara. She was the darling of the old lady, and my inclination and interest led me to cultivate the friendship of the one, and to gain, if possible, the affection of the other. A retired spot in Wales left me in the uninterrupted prosecution of my views; and after an acquaintance of two years, Miss Percival gave me her hand, accompanied with the consent and blessing of her aunt.

The birth of Charles and Rosara was soon after followed by the death of our benefactress. Old age has sometimes its caprices. Mrs. Courtland was the
only

only remaining branch of an ancient House, and seemed anxious, on her death-bed, that I should take up the name, and also a profession, in which her favourite brother had rendered himself conspicuous. My disposition was well prepared for the sacred character I was to support, and I consented to her wishes, in a manner that convinced her how gratefully I felt her former kindnesses. She soon after died, and left us a fortune, which, though small, when added to my own, enabled me to form schemes for the future welfare and prosperity of my little family.

‘ I had not long entered into holy orders, when the living I now enjoy falling vacant, I became the purchaser. Here the enjoyment of a calm and domestic life received a shock, which the hand of time can never entirely obliterate from
my

my memory—the death of my beloved Mrs. Courtland! Excuse me from dwelling on a subject so painful to my recollection: suffice it to say that the fortitude and resignation which ought to accompany the severest visitations of God, especially in a Minister of his Gospel, sustained me under this heavy affliction: and my sweet daughter, who is the counterpart of her mother, continues to smooth, by every gentle assiduity, the close of my declining life.

‘ From my correspondents in Paris I have, for these last two years, withdrawn myself, and for reasons which it will be unnecessary to mention. That I have changed my name, and taken up the profession of a Clergyman, they are likewise ignorant of, from the same motives. All that it was necessary for them to know,

on

on some settlement of my concerns with them, was, the circumstance of my marriage, and the birth of my children.

‘ When I quitted France, my plan was to reside in London, and to enter into some mercantile speculations, which my agent there had recommended to my attention. These arrangements I never contradicted; my letters were directed to my banker in London, and forwarded to me. Of Sir Ashby Meriton’s marriage I had long heard:—that an only son was the issue, I was also apprized of; and, Oh Mr. Fordyce! will you believe that I frequently thought if our friendship could now be renewed by an union of our families, I should then end my days in peace and honour. But how could I, after so long a seclusion, after so abrupt a renunciation of his friendship, obtrude myself upon him?

him? No—my pride, for I confess I felt it—a delicacy, perhaps a mistaken one, forbade me. Little did I then suspect he was anxiously seeking for me, and for this very purpose; else might I have once more embraced him ere he died, and my Rosara might have received the blessing of a second father.’

“ Having made some necessary arrangements in regard to the conduct we should pursue, I gave Mr. Courtland my direction in Hampshire, and we separated. You soon after introduced yourself, and commenced your attack upon the virtuous and innocent Rosara. The conduct of Mr. Courtland, you well recollect to have been, in many instances, mysterious: it will now no longer appear so. From the moment of our parting, till you came to the resolution of using force, our correspondence

spendence was uninterrupted. The faithful Lovel, when dispatched to Bexfield to make the necessary preparations for your reception, informed me of his suspicions; and from concurring circumstances, I was convinced they were well founded. But how could I inform the excellent Mr. Courtland of a scheme, which I cannot even now think of but with horror? I am convinced, had I then imparted it to him, his immediate indignation would have surmounted all other considerations, and he would have torn Rosara from you for ever. In this dilemma I laid a plan of counteraction, which, through Providence, succeeded to my utmost wishes. In the first place, I cautioned Lovel not to mention your design, either directly or indirectly, to Mr. Courtland, his daughter, or his servants. In the meantime I repaired to Bexfield, and introduced

duced myself to Mrs. Morrison. She recollected her old master's friend, and received me with tears of joy. Her I was obliged to make my confidant, and she entered into my schemes with an alacrity which convinced me of her real affection for you. You may remember your visit was delayed on some pretence of Lovel's; and in the meantime I had a pannel made in the closet of the chamber designed for Miss Courtland, very nicely executed, and from whence was a communication to the room beneath, which luckily happened to be a lumber room, and which opened into the grove of firs. The time being fixed for the commencement of your plan, Lovel sent me a letter, in which he acquainted me that you suspected him, and had given him orders to proceed another way. This intelligence did not, however, affect my schemes; my

servants were all faithful to me, and strove which could soonest obey my orders. I took care, among other things, to dispatch a letter to Mr. Courtland, which was to be delivered to him the moment he should be made acquainted with his daughter's danger. In this he was requested not to be alarmed, but to set off immediately for Romsey, where he would meet his daughter. I then unfolded to him the scheme by which I meant not only to save her, but, if possible, to impress on your mind such thoughts and ideas as might pave the way for your reformation.

" You arrived, Sir George, with your profligate associates. I saw, from a private closet, the trembling Rosara descend from the carriage. I had previously admonished Mrs. Morrison to speak com-

fort to her afflicted heart, and to bid her confide in Providence; I myself had put confidence in him, and I felt sure of his divine assistance. I had an opportunity, from my different retreats, of hearing all your determinations: the last dreadful one put me upon my guard, and I hastened to my station in the closet.

“ The evening had set in, and my servants had been ordered, all well armed, to attend with a post-chaise in a bye-lane at the bottom of the grove. In this place you had not thought of placing spies; for indeed you could have no idea of a rescue coming from that quarter. The sighs, the tears, the terrible apprehensions of my sweet sufferer were more than I could well support; and had only her deliverance been my object, I might

have saved her the misery of her last interview with you by then discovering myself; but I wished you to be impressed with more awful ideas. The night was favourable to my wishes, and in a pause of the storm, at that awful moment when you were about to sacrifice your eternal happiness, the *word* your Rosara's indignation first prompted her to utter, and which I forcibly echoed, produced its full effect; and I was satisfied you would not renew your attacks till you had explored the mystery.

“ My pannel was so artfully contrived, and in so unsuspecting a place, that you passed it over in your search; and on your quitting the room, I hastily removed it, and stood before the terrified Rosara. She had never seen me before; and ignorant as she was of any acquaintance

ance subsisting between her father and me, her surprise was not to be wondered at.—‘Fear nothing,’ said I, ‘I am the friend of innocence, and am come to save you. I cannot now explain myself further: Sir George may return, and then you are lost for ever!’—Her escape was not effected without considerable hazard and difficulty. I had scarcely closed the pannel, through which she followed me, not without apprehension of some new deceit, when, overcome by her terrors, she fainted in my arms, and I was obliged to summon all my strength and skill to support her safe down the ladder. In the room beneath I found two of my servants, stationed as I had previously desired them, who immediately conveyed her through the grove to my chaise. I followed as speedily as I could, anxious to give ease to the mind of my fair sufferer, and

dreading the effects of the tumultuous scene she had undergone. How shall I describe the grateful ecstasy of her soul, when she found I was her father's friend, and was conducting her to his arms again? The transition was too great, and ere we reached Romsey, she was attacked with the most alarming symptoms.—I pass over a month's severe indisposition my sweet girl laboured under, nor do I here accuse the author of her sufferings: no, Sir George, great as they were, they could not have been equal to the mental misery you endured. The arrival, and constant attendance of her father, my own anxiety for her recovery, aided by an excellent natural constitution, restored her at length to her former health; but her love, we saw, was still unsubdued, and it became necessary to reveal all our plans to her regarding you, and the history

tory of the western apartments. Till some issue should be put to these plans, Mr. Courtland and his daughter consented to reside with me, and proper directions were accordingly sent to Ches-hunt respecting the Vicarage.

“ The dismissal of Lovel from your service made it necessary for me to employ an able and a faithful substitute. William was recommended and chosen: the whole scheme was imparted to him, and the honest fellow swore fidelity to his trust. Lovel, having given him full instructions, repaired to Romsey; and as I could confide in his zeal, I entrusted the future correspondence to him, and was enabled, in consequence, to devote more of my attention to my interesting visitors.

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“ Mr. Charles Courtland had paid no attention to his father’s letters, the second of which, had he received it in time, would have explained every thing; and the tidings of the duel left us in a state of cruel uncertainty both in respect to your recovery from your wound, and the consequence of this rash man’s apprehensions and flight. His passions, like your’s, Sir George, were then plunging him into distresses which, had he mildly regarded his father’s advice, he had never known. Anxious to relieve, if possible, the dreadful doubts of his father respecting his fate, and the anguish Rosara felt for the sufferings of a beloved brother, I hastened to London, with a determination to prosecute my enquiries till they should, in some degree, succeed. From the newspaper accounts, I found that a Captain Melmouth had been the second of Mr. Courtland;

Courtland; and as I had before heard the good Clergyman mention this gentleman, I instantly repaired to his house, a neat little villa about ten miles from Hatfield. What was my consternation to learn from him the desperate state of young Courtland's mind, and the manner in which he had abruptly quitted his house! To advertise him in the public papers, appeared now my only resource; but this step might have excited your curiosity, and we might have met before our time. On my return to London, and whilst I was pondering on what course to pursue, I received a letter from Captain Melmouth, (with whom, at parting, I had left my direction in London, under a feigned name,) acquainting me with a circumstance which, though it removed my present apprehensions regarding the fate of this unhappy young man, left me

in a state of solicitude and disappointment, scarcely less embarrassing:—it ran as follows:—

“ SIR,

“ The fate of our friend Mr. Courtland is now decided. A man called upon me yesterday with a letter from him, informing me that having indisputable reason to believe Sir George Meriton was dead of his wound, he had enlisted as a soldier in the ——— regiment, and was on the eve of embarking for the West Indies. He thus concludes his letter—

‘ Perhaps I may yet have been misinformed; but I will not run the risk of being disgraced by a public trial for murder. The man who brings this, knows my direction, and is in my confidence: to him entrust your letters; and should happier prospects

spects appear, or should my present hurry have deceived me, I know you will exert yourself for my discharge.'——

“Alas! Sir, it is now too late to recall him. The fleet has sailed, and he may be destined to endure many hardships and indignities ere he can again be restored to his friends. Let me have the pleasure of seeing you as soon as possible.”

“I hasten to conclude this part of my narrative, as it brings me to circumstances most interesting to you. The regiment in which young Courtland had enlisted, was destined for St. Domingo. An opportunity very soon after offered of sending my dispatches. One letter was addressed to the commanding Officer, containing a proper statement of the young

young soldier's case; the other was to him, fully explaining the present situation of his father and sister, the particulars of your history, and begging him to use every exertion on his part to gain his release, and return to England.

“ It was in vain for me to disguise these truths from Mr. Courtland and his fair daughter: indeed I thought it right they should know the worst, that they might be prepared for any new calamity that might arise in the course of the time that must necessarily elapse before they could all meet again. After a painful interval of two years, the fugitive was restored to us. He had found the greatest difficulty in gaining his discharge; and for want of money, had been driven to the greatest extremities. I had indeed procured him a letter of recommendation

mendation to a gentleman residing in the settlement; but he had been dead two months before the arrival of the fleet, and had died insolvent.

“ I pass over many distresses and hardships our young adventurer underwent, in consequence of his poverty and natural pride, which latter prevented him from making such applications as might have procured him assistance. Suffice it to observe, that he had been punished, though not in an equal degree with yourself, for suffering his passions to take the lead of his judgment, and having been inattentive to the admonitions of an indulgent father.

“ The letters of William now became every day more alarming. From the Courtlands I took care to conceal the depravity

depravity into which your vicious passions were plunging you, and the ruin I saw impending on your head. They were, indeed, afraid to enquire, and Rosara read in my looks and manner that I had nothing flattering to her hopes to impart.

“ About this period I found it necessary to employ part of the fortune which had been entrusted to my care; and your steward, to whom it was necessary I should impart my schemes, purchased for me the Bexfield estate, after having discharged the mortgage upon it.

“ Your intended visit to the Abbey filled me with the greatest alarm; I dreaded an infringement of your solemn promise to your father—I recollected his last solemn command—‘ Should he break that promise, he is not worth reclaiming; and

and I charge you, as you value my dying request, abandon him to his fate for ever!"

"It now became necessary for me to acquaint the Courtlands with your designs; and after some debate, Mr. Courtland, the younger, proposed that we should take a journey into Devonshire, and there think on some means of preventing the probable effects of this sudden visit.

Lovel was immediately dispatched to look out for some comfortable and private habitation near the Abbey; but charged on no account to visit old Morrison and his wife, as I had my private reasons for wishing to keep them in ignorance of my plans, and that they should have no idea of my even having been near the Abbey since our departure together. The faithful valet returned in two days with the intelligence that he had procured a temporary

temporary accommodation for me and young Mr. Courtland at the cottage of one of the oldest and most faithful of your tenants, about two miles from the Abbey; but that he had been obliged to let him partly into the secret, to prevent the possibility of a discovery taking place.

“ Leaving old Mr. Courtland and Rosara in Hampshire, we accordingly, on the following morning, set out on our journey, accompanied by Lovel and another servant, and arrived at our small habitation the day before you were expected down. Here, however, we were at a loss how to proceed in our plan of counteraction, without discovering ourselves to Morrison and his wife. I knew your old servant's scrupulous regard to truth, and how ill-qualified he was to evade the questions you might put to him;

him; yet it was necessary we should have access to the Abbey, and that in as private a manner as possible. After some consultation, Lovel was entrusted with the key of the western apartments, and desired to explore them carefully. I did not think it improbable but there might be some other door within the chambers communicating with the other parts of the Abbey, and which Sir Ashby, in his examination, might have overlooked.

“ It was almost dusk before Lovel ventured out, as he was fearful of being observed and recollected by some of the villagers. After an absence of two hours, he returned with smiles on his countenance.

“ I have been successful!” exclaimed he; “ there is a communication by a small

small door at the end of the gallery ;—it was locked ; but as I despaired of being able to find the key, and as my lantern limited me to time, I broke it open. To my great joy I beheld a spiral staircase, which I guessed, by its direction, might lead to some room near the great gallery of the Abbey. I descended cautiously the steps, and after several turnings and windings, came to another door, which was likewise locked. This I was fearful of breaking open, lest the noise should alarm Morrison and his wife, and therefore thought it prudent to return.’

“ The following evening, Sir George, you arrived. Accompanied by Loveland and young Courtland, I had reached the forbidden apartments, and was in the act of exploring the newly discovered entrance, when we heard the mingled tumult
which

which your arrival occasioned. What were then my grief and consternation? I doubted not but you would immediately rush to the forbidden apartments, and to consequent ruin. I determined, however, to proceed; and being arrived at the second door, Lovel picked the lock. We now found ourselves at the bottom of the spiral staircase, leading to the great gallery; and upon closing the door, observed that it had been constructed to look like a part of the wall, and that this was evidently a private way through the Abbey, not originally designed to be generally known. I could not help being struck by the singularity of this discovery, so necessary at such a time to the accomplishment of our wishes.

I knew that this part of the Abbey had for a long time been uninhabited; we
therefore

therefore ventured to ascend the spiral staircase, leaving our light at the door of the secret entrance. Being arrived at the great staircase, we heard you and your companions talking loud in an adjoining room; and as I was anxious to hear any resolutions you might form respecting the western apartments, I approached the anti-chamber leading to the breakfast parlour, which I found locked. I was now more embarrassed than ever. To pick this lock without being discovered, I concluded impossible. My only resource then was, to try if the key of the western apartments would open this door, as I knew it was a master-key to all the rooms on that side of the Abbey. To my great joy the lock gave way, and we entered the room. Here, Sir George, I heard the conversation of you and your dissolute companions: here I was
first

first made acquainted with the miserable change a few fleeting years had made in your sentiments and disposition. The pangs of grief and disappointment too forcibly struck upon my heart, and a *groan* issued from my bosom, which I in vain endeavoured to suppress. An alarm was instantly spread, and we were obliged to make a precipitate retreat. On arriving at the secret door, I again applied my master-key with success, and we returned to the western apartments, and from thence to our cottage.

“ Our faithful host informed us the next morning, that the greatest surprise and consternation had been excited by the dismal groan that had been heard in the Abbey, and that even you betrayed some symptoms of alarm. It was then that I determined to strengthen, if possible,

possible, your apprehensions of some *supernatural* agency being employed to guard the forbidden apartments, by which means I could alone hope to awe you into forbearance, should you attempt to explore them. Confirmed in this determination by the concurrence of my friends, I waited impatiently for the evening, that I might renew my observations on your conduct. I observed, with some degree of hope, that you still wanted the stimulus of wine to render you fit company for your dissolute friends, and that it would be only in a moment of inebriety you would think of breaking your promise. In the morning, therefore, I was satisfied I had nothing to apprehend. In the meantime I thought of dispatching a letter to Mr. Courtland, giving him an account of the progress of my scheme. I had already made out a
rough

rough copy of what I intended to send, and was mortified, on searching for one of the fragments, to find it gone. Where I could have lost it, I had then no idea; little did I suspect it had fallen into your hands, and that I had pulled it probably out of my pocket with my handkerchief, as I retreated from the spiral staircase the evening before.

“ As night approached, we again issued from our retreat, and paid a second visit to the Abbey. This was attended with less difficulty and apprehension than the former, as we knew we had no interruption to fear, and were in possession of a key, which appeared constructed, not only to open the doors of the forbidden apartments, but every apartment in the Abbey.

“ Being come to the anti-chamber, we were somewhat surprised on finding

the door locked, which we had left open; and concluded, from this circumstance, that you must have been examining the north side of the Abbey. As we entered the chamber, Selgrave was proposing that you should give a dance to the farmers' daughters in the *western apartments*. I expected an immediate acquiescence from you, and was rather agreeably disappointed at not hearing a single word escape your lips that indicated consent. From this silence I formed the most flattering conclusions; and when we heard a card-table called for, and supper ordered to be got ready, we quitted the anti-chamber, satisfied that you would not, at all events, attempt any thing that night, and returned, as before, to our cottage.

“ Your conduct now convinced me that nothing but absolute intoxication could

could ever bring you to the commission of what I so much dreaded, and that during the day I had certainly nothing to fear. The following evening, you may remember, was dark and rainy; yet this circumstance did not prevent our visit to the Abbey. We arrived at our place of concealment just time enough to hear your proposal to your two associates, Melbank and Darnley, that they should, in the first instance, examine the forbidden apartments. I need not describe to you the sensations of my mind; that you should make use of this mean evasion, appeared to me an aggravation, rather than an extenuation of your crime: and in the moment of desperate indignation, I was about to leave you for ever to your fate—to tear from you Rosara, and every chance of returning peace. The entreaty of young Mr. Courtland

and Lovel prevailed, and I consented to make one last struggle to save you. To awaken a *superstitious* dread in your heart, now appeared the only alternative. I remembered the expressive *word* that had at Bexfield saved you from destruction; and having hastily explained my designs to young Courtland and Lovel, they left me in the anti-chamber, and hastened to the forbidden apartments with a resolution to use every effort to frighten the obtruders from their purpose: I alone remained to watch over you, Sir George. You may remember that, when left alone with Selgrave and the old housekeeper, you suddenly started up, determined to follow; it was then the *warning voice* you had once before heard, spread terror in the hearts of all. I had little time left me to contemplate the consternation it occasioned, but

rapidly retreated to my friends. My satisfaction was complete when they informed me of the success of their stratagem.

‘ We arrived,’ said Lovel, ‘ just in time. I saw Morrison’s lantern at a distance, and opening one of the arched windows of the long gallery, watched their approach. The moon at that instant breaking through the clouds, I observed them passing the arch, and with all the effect I was able, uttered a long and piercing groan ! This unexpected yell produced a pause. Five minutes elapsed before either of the party ventured to proceed, during which short interval young Mr. Courtland observed that if *something* could be seen as well as heard, it would assuredly deter them from approaching further. I immediately recollected that at the end

of the long gallery there was a little flight of steps, which led to the top of the tower.—‘If you make your appearance immediately, Sir,’ said I, ‘the moon will stand our friend; but make haste.’ The party in the meantime advanced, and ascended the steps of the entrance to the long gallery. I was obliged then to quit my post, and fly to the door. The stroke of an iron crow filled me with consternation! I knew that a repetition of the blow must force the door open, and with all the energy I could muster, I pronounced the word ‘*tremble!*’ as you had directed me. The effect was almost instantaneous. I heard the crow fall to the ground, and the party hurry away. I returned to my station at the window, and to my great joy, observed they were hastening towards the arch, on their way back. Mr.

Courtland

Courtland at that moment joined me in the long gallery ; and it appeared from his statement, that he had been observed at the very instant of the first attempt to break open the door : to his figure, and my warning coming at the same time, we probably owe the success of our scheme. —

“ On the following day I was agreeably surprised to hear of your departure. Your promise still remained unbroken, and left me again at liberty to pursue my plans for your future return to virtue and happiness.

“ We returned to Hampshire soon after. Rosara, and her venerable father, received us with tears of congratulation ; and the correspondence of William and Lovel was renewed with unremitting assiduity.

“ The selling of the Abbey, the seat of your ancestors, by public auction, was the next melancholy step to destruction. I could not answer your summons in a better way than by becoming the purchaser, and rescuing it from such disgrace. I need not say how the rapid approaches of poverty, and all its attendant calamities, soon succeeded; and in the space of another three years, you sunk, exhausted, under the dominion of the deepest despair.

“ At this period I began to pity your sufferings. The comforts of religion you had never known; and William was ordered to supply you, in your wretched lodgings, with such books as might recal your attention to those tenets you had so rashly abandoned.

“ His letters now became every day more interesting, as they convinced us
the

the work of reformation was begun. The tender Rosara partook of your sufferings, but the chastisement of justice was yet to be completed.

“ I now thought it necessary to come to town. Dangers began to threaten you, and I to dread the consequences of Selgrave's desertion. My apprehensions were too well founded. William met me at the place I had appointed, and told me you had received a letter from the wretched Inglefield, and was then gone to Mr. Selgrave's chambers, with a resentment in your countenance it was impossible for you to conceal. My recollection for a moment forsook me. How to prevent a duel I knew not; yet something was to be done. I instantly ordered William to conduct me to your lodgings, but not to come in with me. Here I left *that book*, Sir George, which afterwards

wards made so happy an impression upon your mind, and finally saved you from the worst fate that could have befallen you.

“ I then hastened to Selgrave’s chambers ; you were gone. That night, my friend, I had little sleep ; my prayers were every hour offered up to Heaven, that the pious work which I had mysteriously thrown in your way, might have the intended effect, and deter you from the bloody business you were meditating ; but I had no other means of preventing it, as I was ignorant when and where you had appointed your meeting.

“ At six I was awakened by William ; the poor fellow could scarcely tell me you had been arrested at Selgrave’s suit, and that the bailiffs were conducting you to prison. Lovel had arrived in town on the preceding evening ; and after some debate, it was determined that he should
prepare

prepare you for the trial of constancy you were to undergo. When I heard you had taken *Sherlock* with you, I received more lively satisfaction than I have now language to express: it was to me a sufficient proof that you had ceased to despise the offered consolations of religion, and these I knew would ultimately reclaim you.

“ Your interview with your faithful valet nevertheless gave me great alarm; there was a despondency in your manner nothing allied to resignation, and I judged it high time to watch over you myself. I arrived at your prison door about the time you had appointed Lovel to visit you. A small room joined it, the wainscot of which being cracked, afforded me an opportunity of contemplating the condition of your mind. I requested the keeper to withdraw; and for nearly
two

two hours I witnessed, uninterrupted, the various workings of a heart, torn with the anguish of contending passions. In a paroxysm of despair, you pulled a pistol from your bosom, but looked at it only to dash it from you. Sherlock lay open upon the table—the struggles of virtue prevailed, and you piously resigned yourself to the will of Heaven.

“ My work was now accomplished ; your repentance was proved sincere, and justice appeased. But you were yet to undergo another trial ; that impatient spirit, which had, in your career of dissipation, prevented the suggestions of reason, was to be wholly subdued, and your *assurance of future happiness* confirmed by a steady submission under the severest of calamities—the supposed loss of Rosara. Your conduct convinced me you thought she still lived ; and though you had no
reason

reason to suppose I had ever heard of, or seen such a person, yet you were afraid to mention her name before me. I was soon satisfied that a calm and steady principle of behaviour had succeeded to those turbulent passions which had before misled you, and I hastened to accomplish my plans.

“ In consequence of my directions, Morrison and his wife had long been made acquainted with all former proceedings at the Abbey, and were now ordered to have the western apartments prepared against the arrival of the Courtland family. As my correspondence with them was regular, they were made acquainted with my victory over you, time enough to prepare *the solemn pageantry* in the western tower. This proceeding, I confess, was rather romantic, and was reluctantly consented to by all parties:

ties: but I was anxious to be satisfied, beyond a doubt, of the firmness of your mind, and the sincerity of your repentance; and that even *the death of Rosara* had not power to shake your resolution, or disturb the sublimer hopes you had at length found grace to cherish. You, my friend, will forgive this last unnecessary punishment: I am sure you will when I tell you that your fortitude and piety under a trial so hard, gave me a purer sensation of pleasure than I ever did or ever shall again experience.

“ One circumstance alone remains now to be explained—the unhappy Selgrave’s expiation on the bed of death! He has left you a legacy of ten thousand pounds, and the rest of his fortune to you, in trust for the surviving family of the deluded Miss Inglefield. Be it your care,

care, my dear friend, to discharge an obligation so sacred.

“ Thus have I fulfilled my promise. Restored to peace, and in the arms of virtuous love, may you enjoy the favour of Heaven with humble thankfulness, and submit to its future chastisements without a murmur! So shall the current of your days glide smoothly on, till the cherub Faith soften the hour of death, and tranquilly consign you to the grave.

“ FORDYCE.”

CONCLUSION.

Sir Ashby Meriton had been buried in the village church. A beautiful evening was drawing to a close as Sir George finished his interesting story; and the sound of the distant chimes vibrated in melancholy cadence upon his ear. He arose from his seat. Lady Meriton at that

that moment entered the room. She was surprised at the emotion visible in his countenance. He took her hand.—“I am about to visit my father’s grave,” said he; “will you accompany me, Rosara?” A tear started in her eye: she kissed the Baronet’s hand, and they proceeded from the Abbey together. They arrived at the conclusion of a solemn ceremony; one of his oldest tenants had paid his debt to nature. Sir George stopped at the tomb of his father, and both knelt down.—“Spirit of a beloved father, receive the tears of gratitude from thy repentant child. At length he is declared worthy to enjoy this thy valuable gift, and may approach, without trembling, thy awful shrine. Peace to thy ashes! Heaven has received thy atonement, and angels are singing thee to rest!”

F I N I S.

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LANE, MINERVA-PRESS, LEADENHALL-STREET.